

# DIVA

NOVEMBER 2015 UK £3.99

SUE PERKINS

Her brilliant new memoir

## The Sex Issue

SARAH WATERS

Tipping The Velvet  
20 years on

REVENGE PORN

How the new online  
crime affects us

"YOU DON'T LOOK  
LIKE A LESBIAN"

The hidden world  
of feminine lesbians

"MY SEXUALITY  
HAS NEVER BEEN  
IN QUESTION"

A TRANS LESBIAN  
WRITES ABOUT SEX

JEANETTE  
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"Our society is broken  
but we can do better"

20 WAYS TO GET &  
GIVE THE BEST  
ORGASM, EVER





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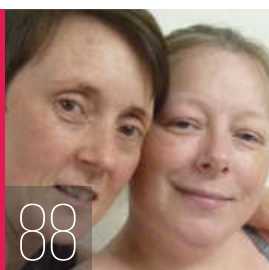
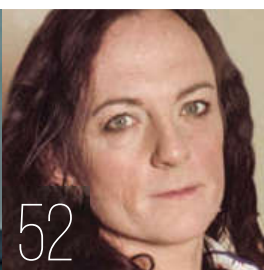
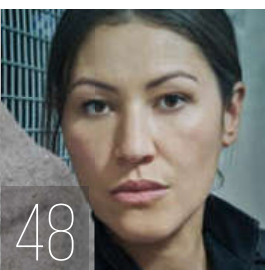
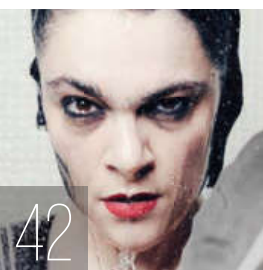
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## EDITOR'S LETTER



Back by popular demand is our **Sex Issue**. A little sooner than last year but we aim to please. Lady-loving sex matters are very much on our minds this month. Ok then, every month! But in November we're co-hosting a special event in London with LGBT+ mental health charity PACE (p64) looking at sex and relationships, with speakers and workshops. Reserve your free ticket at [pacehealth.org.uk](http://pacehealth.org.uk). As we go to press it's also **Black History Month** and on p16 we remember the queer people of colour who gave rise to the Gay Liberation Movement. Join DIVA in Liverpool

this month when columnist **Jay Bernard** joins me and a panel of artists to discuss the black artists we love at **Homotopia** (p20). We're thrilled that Hilary McCollum has unearthed the **stories of the suffragettes who loved other suffragettes** at a time when gay love dared not speak its name (p44). And we celebrate a trifecta of lesbian talent with **Jeanette Winterson** (p38), **Sarah Waters** (p28) and **Sue Perkins** (p50). What's that? More sex, you say? Oh, ok then. How about **Charlotte Cooper** on queer sex and how to find out about it (p18) or **Debbie Louise Cannon** on sex since she transitioned (p52). Polyamory with **Rosie Wilby** (p54). Or how sex changes as we age (p62). Finally, this month we have two great offers on our print edition – get 3 issues for £7.99 or, even better, 6 issues for just £14.99. That's **37% off the cover price**. And an offer you won't find anywhere else. More details on p12.

**Jane Czyzelska**  
**DIVAMAG.CO.UK**

## NEXT MONTH



### DECEMBER ISSUE on sale 19 November

Equals star Kristen Stewart talks about her new movie

Especially for you: Christmas gifts, made by lesbian and bi craftswomen

Rubbish Lesbian says a fond farewell to DIVA

Bound Feet Blues: Yang May Ooi's coming out and life story, told in shoes

How to survive Christmas

Lesbians and gays support the migrants: on the frontline in Lesbos

Homophobic violence: readers tell their stories

Sapphic seance: author Lorna Gibb on lesbian ghosts

## CONTACT US!



### GOT AN IDEA FOR AN ARTICLE?

Email [edit@divamag.co.uk](mailto:edit@divamag.co.uk) and tell us all about it



### WANT TO GIVE US SOME FEEDBACK OR SHARE AN EXPERIENCE WITH OTHER READERS?

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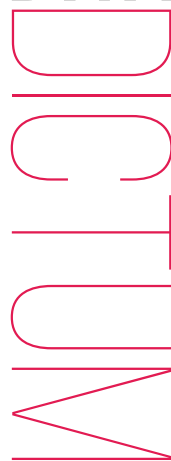
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## DIVA



What's the sexiest thing about autumn?

Editor Jane Czyzelska

"Knitwear"

Deputy editor Louise Carolin

"Well obviously, the crumpet"

Editorial assistant Carrie Lyell

"Keeping warm with someone else"

Designer Fernando Safont

"Winter is coming..."

Music editor Sarah-Jane Roberts

Books editor Eden Carter Wood

Film editor Lucy Peters

Travel editor Lucy Fry

Diary editor Dora Mortimer

Art editor Anna McNay

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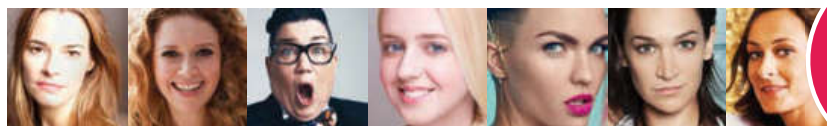
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## Star Letter

### DO THE RIGHT THING

After reading the whole October issue from cover-to-cover non-stop, I felt the need to write to you! This is the best issue I've read in ages – that's not to say the other issues are not good – but I literally couldn't put this issue down. Every page was excellent, and I really felt they spoke to me personally. Particular credit has to go to Alena for the article on whiteness – something I'm very conscious of as, although Cardiff is multicultural, our LGBT+ community is very white. To stand up and acknowledge that, and to ask the difficult questions on how to give non-white communities a voice, doing what's right but not necessarily what's popular, is really important. I hope Pride In London can learn from this for next year. So, thank you. Thank you for existing. And keep up the good work.

RUTH, Cardiff

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LETTERS



### BI IF WE SAY WE ARE

Jacque Lawrence's article (September) constantly questions the identity of bisexual celebs. Arguing that they do it for attention and questioning their authenticity is biphobic. I love the mag's inclusiveness of bi women in general but this article was biphobic and unfair. The most telling line: "Jodie Marsh... may speak volumes about the sexual authenticity of some contestants." What? Not once is any lesbian celeb or character questioned in the article: only the bisexuals. It is a common theme, people denying bisexual women's experiences and identities based on their public relationships.

@dricalder via Twitter

Jacque Lawrence replies: "In retrospect I realise that the article can be seen as biphobic, which was never my intention. I intended to make the distinction between actual bi women and straight women who knew that producers like to cast bisexual women and used that knowledge to create fake bisexual personas. That this happens is a fact and part of the reality television culture."

I'm not to say that many genuine bisexuals have not auditioned and been cast. The reason I focused on bisexuals, rather than lesbians or straight women, was driven by the context of the piece and that bisexual women have been the subject of casting issues more than the other two groups. My views about Jodie Marsh were subjective and not based on fact. For that I apologise."

### RED ALERT

I'd like to thank DIVA for continuing to write articles on subjects that many people still shy away from! Your article on Code Red (October) will be sure to help people feel more attuned to their own bodies. Being in a lesbian relationship, my partner and I have become familiar with each other's behaviour at certain times of the month and not only has this enhanced our trust and closeness in the relationship, it has definitely contributed to an even better and healthier sex life. Let's get more girls talking to each other about this subject!

LAURA, Midlands



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@alisonroxx9

Thank you @DIVAmagazine for discussing the injustices LGBTQ Americans (particularly trans folk and POC) face despite marriage equality.

@sam\_lightyear

Finally in a random shop in Soho - I've picked up my @DIVAmagazine. Man that interview with @harto is SO good.

@AJCARLILE

Enjoying a cup of tea whilst reading this

month's @DIVAmagazine. Personal fave so far...@EffiMai talking about queer baiting.

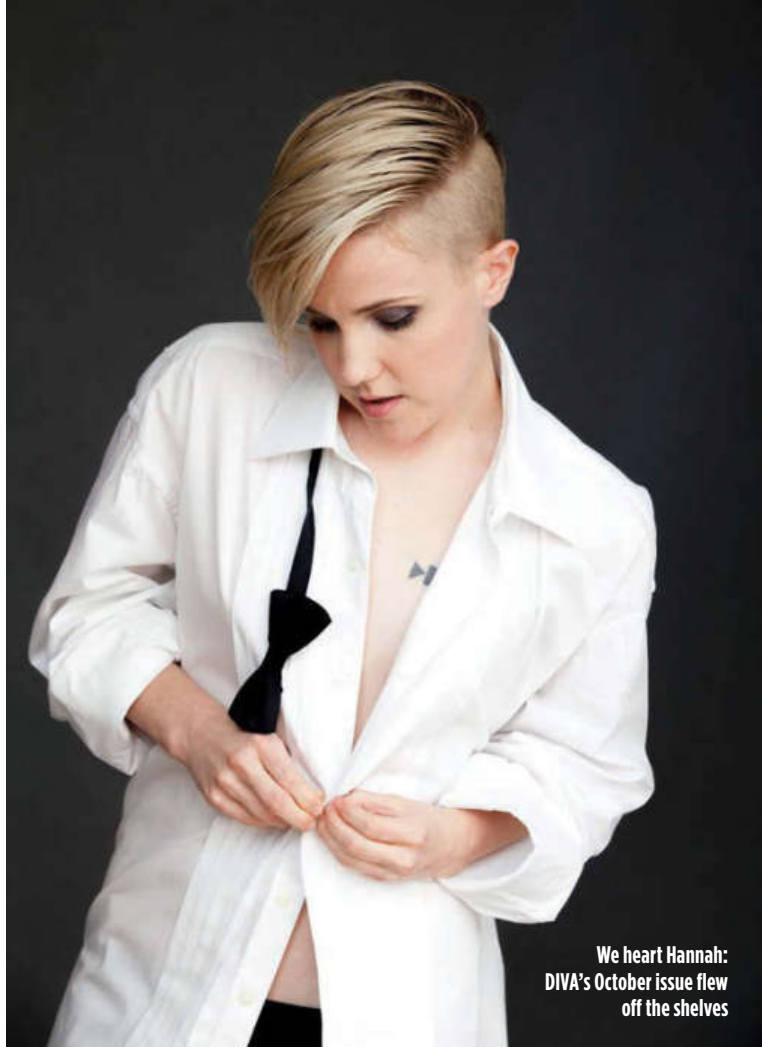
@ValMansell

What a great article - "Out At School" Made me sad, happy, reflective and proud.

@ClaireShrugged

This month's @DIVAmagazine has articles on racism in the LGBT community, queer baiting on TV, and a feature on @harto. Brilliant content!





We heart Hannah:  
DIVA's October issue flew  
off the shelves

## OBITUARY: JULIA WILSON-DICKSON (1949–2015)

Julia Wilson-Dickson was an eminent voice and dialect coach who worked with Glenn Close, Dame Judi Dench and Keira Knightley, among many others. Talented, passionate, sometimes exasperating, Julia was also openly gay at a time when this was rare in an industry that sometimes struggled to accept homosexuality in women.

From 1968-71 Julia attended the Central School of Speech and Drama, qualifying as a teacher in speech, drama and English. It was while she was a student that Julia came out as gay. It was not an easy step for her as she feared both personal and professional rejection. Her concerns were met with the suggestion that she visit a therapist who promised her a "99% cure rate". The experience of her attempted "cure" led Julia to become active in the gay and feminist movements, attending some of the earliest Gay Pride marches.

Julia never gossiped and rarely disclosed the names of the many A-list actors and directors for whom she worked. The many projects she worked on included *Anthony And Cleopatra* starring Judi Dench and Anthony Hopkins, *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*, *The Theory Of Everything*, *Braveheart* and *Cloud Atlas*. Sometimes the only intimation that she was working on a film would come when, sitting in the darkness of a cinema, a friend would see her name rolling on the credits.

Julia enjoyed several committed and loving relationships, the most enduring of which was with Pippa Dale who remained a close friend and soulmate even after they had separated. Pippa and Julia were famous for their social life in both London and France. Enjoying friendships with people of all ages and from all walks of life, they also on occasion hosted exclusive gay dinner parties in their house in Primrose Hill.

Julia was in intensive care for a number of days after she became ill and her bedside was constantly peopled with the many whose lives she had touched – many of whom asked for the curtains to be drawn so that they could read sonnets to her. Shakespeare's sonnets were one of the great loves of Julia's life and everyone confessed to feeling nervous that she would recover only to criticise their breathing or a misplaced stress. Sadly this was not to be.

ABRIDGED: KATE LONDON (AUTHOR AND CLOSE FRIEND)

Opinions expressed by correspondents and contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors of DIVA magazine or its publishers.

Pleased to  
meet you!



Every issue, we invite one of our readers to tell us about her relationship with DIVA.



NAME:  
**SHEL, 38**  
FROM:  
**STAFFORDSHIRE**  
OCCUPATION:  
**FIREFIGHTER**  
IDENTITY:  
**GAY WOMAN**

## WHAT MADE YOU START READING DIVA?

Noticing the words "lesbian life" in bold on the front cover and, of course, a hot lady.

## HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A READER?

Fifteen years, maybe. Am I that old?

## PRINT OR DIGITAL?

I like touchy-feely.

## WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT DIVA?

The online horoscopes crack me up. The music feature... All of it! I like how you interact with your readers more than ever.

## WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF?

Lesbian erotica... just sayin! Maybe a feature where readers can showcase their stories? The dating section to have a photo! A section or feature on lesbians that feel isolated.

## WHO ELSE READS YOUR COPY?

Well I've left it lying around work a few times, so I'm sure most of the fire station and whoever is behind me on the bike at the gym (Sunday morning ritual: DIVA and a two-hour spin).

## WHAT HAPPENS TO COPIES WHEN YOU'VE READ THEM?

I take them to my hairdressers, work and local LGBT centre. I did have a huge back collection!

## WHO WOULD YOU PUT ON THE COVER AND WHY?

Am I allowed to say myself? No, I'm joking... Heather Peace, every time. Serious women who inspire and have a great story, like Vicky Beeching.

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# Feeling straight



A few months ago I was in L.A. I was staying in Hollywood, which, like all other city districts, has its

rich and its poor. The dazed homeless and the potentially famous are blinded by the same white sun. Everyone is in glasses. Everyone is in cars. Witches stand around Sunset Boulevard, eating tacos. Because LA is mostly homeless people and rich people, and witches make up the middle class.

My friend, N, and I had been on a kind of zany trip across America, in which we'd spent nearly every waking hour in each other's company. Now the trip had ended in West Hollywood, and we were getting ready to head out, have a drink, see a film. We had a few hours to spare. We were chatting, as ever, about the fact that we wanted to hook up, but it just wasn't happening. I was seeing someone very cool who unfortunately lived far away; N was in the middle of things with a couple of people. Then the conversation turned:

**N:** You know, my problem is that I like really masculine people but they don't like me because I'm also masculine.

**J:** Yeah, I think I like masculine people too, but I definitely like women.

Feminine women with some kind of edge.

**N:** It's such a fucking pain in the ass because I don't want to have to change my presentation just to get people to like me.

For the first time since my crooked queer birth, I felt what must have been *normality*. It was very brief. It felt a bit like when you were 10 and opened the big present at Christmas and it was a Nintendo 64 or whatever. Because you were 10, the N64 was not the product of your labour, but nevertheless it was yours. Shiny, sexy, *unearned*. The feeling passed as quickly as it had come, and I remembered that, oh yeah, we were two queers who liked BDSM and medieval poetry and spent much of our time hunting for XXS shirts in the men's section. I remembered that we were kind of weird as hell in the grand scheme of things and had long ago embraced it. That moment of normality was still conflicted, but for a very brief moment, my inside and my outside matched.

The thing about travelling – particularly to a place where everyone is wondering whether you're important – is that you feel the difference between your external and internal selves. You realise that your perception of where you are from and who you are is not the same as other people's; the social categories that dominate your life no longer exist, so it's hard to talk about yourself

EVERYONE  
LIKES TO FEEL  
NORMAL,  
BUT WHEN  
COMFORT  
COMES AT  
SOMEONE  
ELSE'S COST,  
THE PRICE IS  
TOO HIGH  
SAYS JAY  
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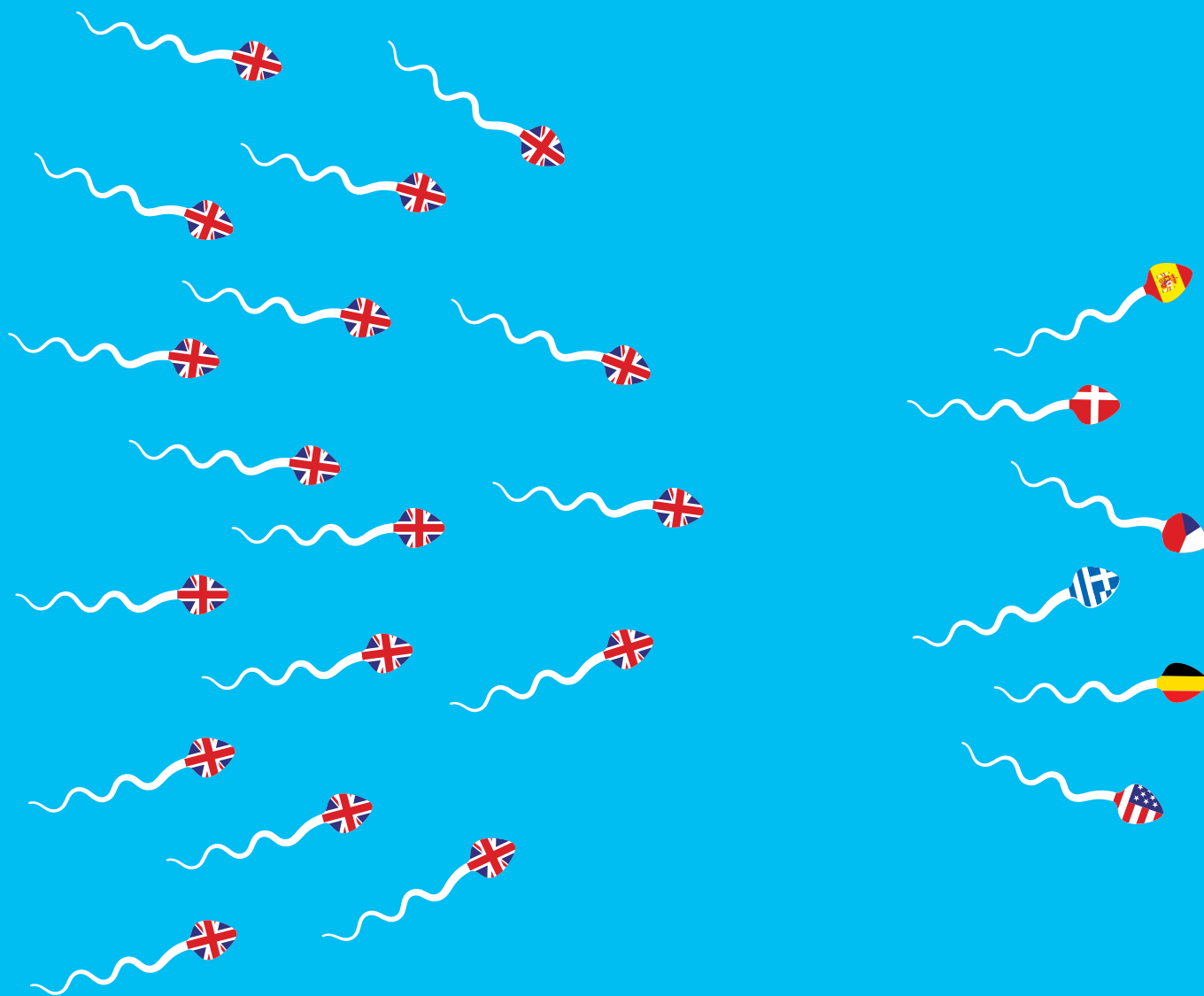
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very brief  
moment,  
my inside  
and my  
outside  
matched

in a way that makes any sense. The cultural differences between America and the UK are not so wide as they are deep, evidenced by the documentary *Same Difference* by Nneka Onuorah. It explores some of the taboo subjects in African-American lesbian culture. The big one is the prohibition of relationships between two studs – that is, two masculine-identified people.

The difference between your external appearance and what you feel inside is given another twist: lesbians take on the same Bible-thumping myopia as homophobes and dismiss stud-on-stud relationships as "gay". Happens among other groups too: gay men who hate feminine men; black people who hate dark skin. But when you must use your own sexual orientation as a slur against people who do not conform to rigid gender roles, you know humanity does not have much time left.

My suspicion is that as they shout about how disgusting it is, they get the same weird flash of norm that I did, talking with my friend. A kind of social popper on which to get high, temporarily erase their own contradictions, and not give a shit about alienating people like N. It's a funny thing to feel disgusted by your own – to even care about what other people choose to do with their bodies. Surely it's an invitation for others to tell you what to do with yours? **D**





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# Honouring our elders

BLACK HISTORY MONTH IS THE TIME TO REMEMBER THE QUEER BLACK WOMEN WHO WERE PIONEERS IN THE GAY CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, SAYS JANE CZYZSELSKA



Stormé DeLarverie was a butch, dual heritage lesbian whose clash with police was possibly one of the defining

moments of the Stonewall uprising, spurring the crowd to action. No one knows for sure who “threw the first punch” on 27 June 1969 at the Stonewall Inn but she was arguably one of the first lesbian liberation activists to launch the gay rights movement.

In an obituary that appeared in the New York Times last year, DeLarverie was described as: “Tall, androgynous and armed – she held a state gun permit.” A habituée of the Lower West Side of Manhattan into her 80s, she patrolled the streets “checking in at lesbian bars on the lookout for what she called ‘ugliness’: any form of intolerance, bullying or abuse of her ‘baby girls’”. When Stormé (pronounced Stormy) died, aged 93, her legal guardian Lisa Cannistraci, owner of the legendary lesbian bar Henrietta Hudson, told the newspaper: “She literally walked the streets of downtown Manhattan like a gay superhero.”


Stormé DeLarverie, Sylvia Rivera,

Marsha P Johnson, Miss Major Griffin-Gacy – all four stepped up and stepped out for justice. All were either queers of colour or Latina; all are frequently overlooked by white historians who privilege the actions of white people over those from black and minority ethnic communities. We don’t know if this is intentional or simply a matter of “unconscious bias” common to those in the US or the UK who don’t have personal experience of racism – one of the privileges that being white affords most of us. What we do know is that the gay white director of the film *Stonewall*, shortly to be released in America, chose the story of a fictional white gay man over the truth. And the truth is that black lesbians, bi and trans women played a pivotal role kick-starting our modern day liberation movement.

Marsha P Johnson, a black trans woman who joined DeLarverie in the riot, later set up STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries) with her friend Sylvia Rivera, to help homeless LGBT people get off the streets.

Miss Major Griffin, a trans woman who reported that police broke her jaw while she was in custody after the riots, continues her activism to this day, working for the Transgender,

Genderqueer and Intersex Justice Project – dedicated to the “fight against imprisonment, police violence, racism, poverty and societal pressures”.

These women are more than worthy, along with DeLarverie, of being represented in a lead movie role. But butch black lesbians aren’t considered worthy of being honoured in a white patriarchal society. Only white, and largely white male, lives are invested with social status. Jasmyn, an LGBT youth organisation in Florida, posted on their Facebook page: “Historical fiction can’t take the place of education. We need history classes to include the stories as they happened. We need to tell these stories ourselves so they are never forgotten.” The American lesbian site *SheWired* asks: “Why create fiction when there’s enough drama in the truth?” And I have to admit the simple answer to that question is: racism. And that’s why Black History Month. That’s why in October, over on our Facebook page and website [divamag.co.uk](http://divamag.co.uk), we’ll be remembering BME lesbian and bisexual women who’ve made a difference. If you have any suggestions about people who you think we should include, please let me know at [edit@divamag.co.uk](mailto:edit@divamag.co.uk). 

**“We need to tell these stories so they are never forgotten”**



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# Let's talk about sex, baby

CHARLOTTE COOPER WISHES SHE COULD GO BACK IN TIME AND GIVE HERSELF SOME ADVICE



When I was a girl my dad and brothers would, on occasion, say homophobic things about other people. It was completely

normalised, a joke. Aside from this, I can remember only two times when Mum said anything about being gay, observations that were separated by years. Once, she pointed at an actor on TV and said authoritatively: "He is a homosexual." In the second instance she told me: "Lesbians do it with their fingers." These words of wisdom were uttered in a vacuum of queer representation in the public sphere and I was socialised in an almost complete queer cultural desert. I say almost because by the time I hit puberty I had developed a deep curiosity about homosexuality that I satisfied by finding, reading and watching forbidden things in secret.

Given this, it is no wonder that I started out in life with a weird idea of what being a sexually active dyke might entail. It wasn't until I was 27 that I found out "doing it with your fingers" meant being fisted off the side of a bed by a mean butch. For years I thought that queer sex meant feeling up each others' tits and lots of hug-

ging. This was supported by lesbian feminist writing of the time, where fucking was a no-no. I'm really laughing as I write this because even though I have a reputation as a bad girl, thanks to my dirty novel *Cherry* being seized for obscenity, these anodyne activities remain central to my dyke fantasy life.

Fear and ignorance go hand in hand. As a young woman I didn't really know how queer sex might unfold and a consequence of this was that I was really scared of doing it. I remember one time slow dancing with someone at a club and then running off because I couldn't handle what might come next. I did not know what to do other than smile sheepishly. I bet I'm not the only one to whom this has happened. I wish that I could flit back in time and whisper encouragement in my ear. I'd tell myself that I don't have to compare myself to what I think other people are doing, that I will definitely be wrong and that it's fine to find my own way. I'd reassure myself that what other people think about what I do is irrelevant as long as the sex is consensual. I'd cup my hand to my ear and say: "If they're fucking you, they are not appalled that you are fat." I'd slip a note into my pocket which would say: you can do whatever the hell you like with your own body.

If only I had been more enlightened

back then. When I started fucking women I had the good fortune to live in a city that hosted regular SM Dykes and SM Bi gatherings. These were a lifeline and gave me the chance to learn sexual skills and feel confident about putting them into practise. If you would like me to set you on fire, stick needles in you, beat you up, pee on you, stick my hand(s) up your bum or make you feel extremely uncomfortable, I know how to do this safely! I learned this stuff by talking to and observing queers who were willing to, er, show me the ropes.

I know that the internet has changed things, but a listicle cannot replace a conversation. Call me a duffer but swiping an app is not a community trying to take responsibility for treating its members with love and respect. Sure, you can talk about sexual politics online in 140 characters but that is different to witnessing them in real life. Where public sex is criminalised, online discussion subject to surveillance, and where queer space is disappearing, it's easy to see how such conversations might be stifled. Even in the 21st century queers might not have access to all the information that we need to feel strong and sexy. **D**

[charlotte@divamag.co.uk](mailto:charlotte@divamag.co.uk)

For years I thought that queer sex meant lots of hugging



[gweddingdirectory.com](http://gweddingdirectory.com)

# GETTING MARRIED



Image: Paola De Paola  
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Last year Claire Kurylowski made a short self-funded film called *In Real Life*, which, on the surface, is about someone watching a viral YouTube video: a young woman shows us how to break out of cable ties in the event that we are attacked and taken hostage. It's a pretty cool trick, and an unusual entryway into a discussion about sexual harassment and the anxiety it breeds.

It's the kind of unusual approach you would expect from a young director who lists Maya Borg, Dee Rees, Kim Longinotto and Josephine Dekker as influences, was part of Dazed Digital's Visionaries series and is being mentored by Ester Martin Bergsma – director of *Something Must Break* (2014) – as part of BFI Flare's mentorship scheme.

*In Real Life* is a combination of contrasting images that do not present an easy or simple view of what it means to be worried about being kidnapped, cable-tied and/or worse because of your gender. It's an approach that feeds into her view of the film industry: "In filmmaking, we all pick our own fights," she says. "but filmmaking is not activism for me, it's more commentary. I wanted to give my character agency, to look at the internal processing of watching something online."

However, she warns against being complacent about direct action and community-building: this year Claire founded Kuntinuum, an event for queer women to discuss various artforms. "Lots of club nights are about hook-up culture," she says. "Kuntinuum is filling a gap. London is so vast, but nothing is for us."

Kurylowski is not out to write a lesbian love story, but to contribute something concrete to a post-everything world of new and fluid categories, coolly pointing out that, "The only difference you can make is what you bring into existence".

[clairekurylowski.co.uk](http://clairekurylowski.co.uk)

Claire Kurylowski and Jay Bernard will be speaking at Homotopia's annual DIVA debate on 14 November. For more information, visit [homotopia.net](http://homotopia.net).

THE NEW  
DIRECTOR  
IS MAKING  
FILMS AND  
SPACE FOR  
WOMEN

WORDS JAY  
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A portrait of Claire Kurylowski, a young woman with long dark hair, wearing a black baseball cap with a white 'P' logo, round gold-rimmed glasses, and a dark blue t-shirt with a graphic. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# Claire Kurylowski





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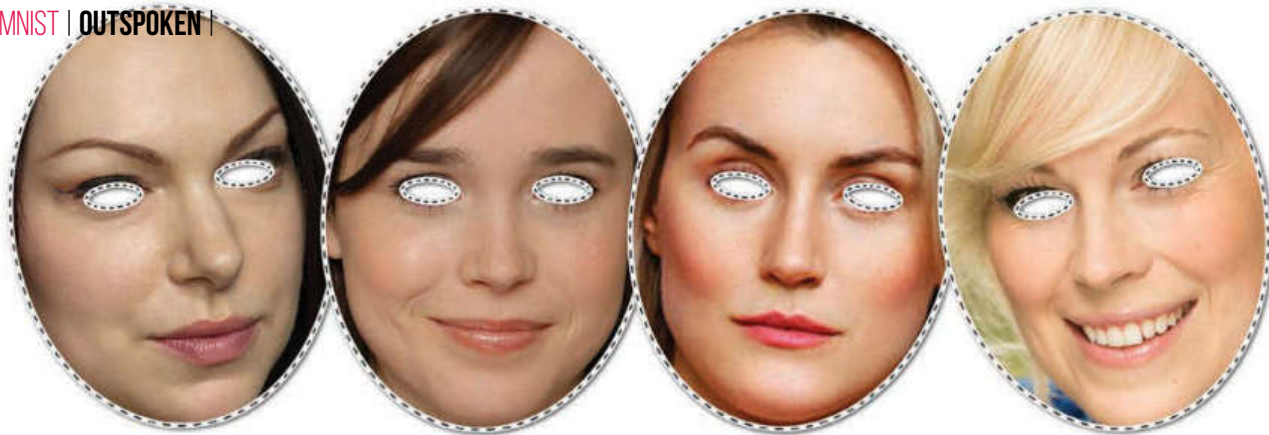
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# Secret sorority?

JUST DON'T  
BE SURPRISED  
WHEN BETHAN  
MORSE  
SAYS SHE'S  
A LESBIAN



Lesbians all around the world are crazy for Ruby Rose, and who can blame them? She's beautiful, butch

and amazingly talented. However, I'm a femme lesbian who is generally attracted to other feminine women. I know I'm not the only one, but it can certainly seem that way. For me, it is refreshing to see lesbians being portrayed in a more feminine light, and *Orange Is The New Black's* Piper and Alex are a great example of a femme-femme relationship. I believe that this is a small breakthrough in a world where potentially harmful and false stereotypes still exist.

Of course, gay women do not necessarily fit into broad categories such as femme and butch, and labelling can be an undesirable, unnecessary and derogatory thing anyway. But my beef isn't primarily about labels; it's about the snap judgments that are made because of how we appear. I love diversity, which is partly why I love leaving our sleepy hometown in Wales to visit more forward-thinking, open-minded places such as Brighton. Gay and lesbian people have been fighting for equality for years, and have achieved so much, but I firmly believe that we also need to celebrate diversity within lesbian culture. Growing up, I never felt that I fit the mould for women because I didn't fancy men.

Unfortunately, even now that I've embraced the gay lifestyle, I still sometimes wonder whether I really "fit in".

New colleagues and acquaintances are really surprised when I tell them

I'm gay. We've all heard the naive responses of straight people trying to fathom gayness, and I am continuously told, "You don't look like a lesbian", or, "I would never have guessed". I feel as though these types of comments are supposed to be a compliment, but instead they just cause me to feel confused and unable to identify so strongly with gay culture.

My hope is that as homosexuality becomes more accepted and integral to modern society, this kind of instant stereotyping will fade away. My girlfriend and I once stayed in a fancy hotel for a romantic weekend away. On checking in, the middle-aged receptionist thought that a mistake had been made with our booking. "It's a double room," she said, a confused look on her face. "Is that ok?" Once realisation had dawned on her, she seemed slightly embarrassed and swiftly checked us in, hardly uttering another word. In a culture where homosexuals remain a minority, I can understand this woman's error. After all, those with little experience of the LGBTQI community often fail to know how to deal with us appropriately. It's more perplexing when this lack of understanding comes from those you would expect to support you. On one occasion we were made to feel extremely unwelcome and uncomfortable in a gay bar, when the barman said, "This is a gay bar, there are straight bars down the road".

So, my question is this: if I had walked in with a funky, short hairstyle instead of my long red hair, sporting a white tank top and jeans instead of my "straight-looking" lacy top, and Beth didn't have beautiful blonde, curly

locks, would we have been served? For single femmes seeking a partner, it can be a struggle to "convince" others that you are batting for the same team. This can cause women to feel undermined, perhaps being left to wonder whether they should change their style. There has been some recent headway in the media, and Vicky Beeching and Ellen Page are excellent examples of more feminine queers. However, a handful is not enough, and I believe that more role models are vital in order to defy butch stereotyping.

As a teenager living in Wales, the media influenced me massively. I wasn't aware of any other lesbians in school, and it wasn't a subject that was ever really spoken about. Although it seems juvenile now, I remember thinking that due to my feminine appearance and personality, perhaps I wasn't a lesbian at all. This can make coming out extremely difficult for feminine lesbians; well-meaning straights often pass comment to femmes that they're going through a phase, because they have a preconceived stereotypical image in their mind of how lesbians should look. It can then also be hard for femmes to seek out gay culture and make friends if they feel they cannot identify with other lesbian folk.

It doesn't matter whether you are femme or butch, let's celebrate our diversity. We need to embrace fellow LGBTQI folk and accept them for who they are. As part of this largely misunderstood minority group, I believe that we should be supporting one another all the way. **D**

@gaygirlbeth  
Susan Calman is on holiday

"This is a  
gay bar,"  
said the  
barman.  
"There are  
straight  
bars down  
the road"





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# Slide this way



It was one of those perfect autumnal days. The sun shone brightly and the sky was a brilliant shade

of optimistic blue. Small dogs paraded in coats from their transitional A/W15 wardrobe, their paws scuffling among the dry autumn leaves, and as I strode down Monmouth Street I could feel a change in the air. It was time to buy some new lube.

Some people just can't get enough lube. We all know a lube enthusiast, that one friend who lashes it on like a human Slip 'n' Slide before any sexual encounter. You know they've got a cash and carry-sized pump-action dispenser beside the bed, because they've told you so on more than one occasion. Well, for the record, I'm not one of those people.

In fact, until recently I thought of lube solely as the answer to a problem, as a sexual WD40. I'd only consider using it if I came across some rusty parts, when one squirt could get things running more smoothly. To preemptively slap some on your own bits seemed like a slight on your partner's aptitude, like turning up to their house for dinner with your own ready meal and popping it straight in the microwave.

My ambivalent feelings towards lube

SARAH WESTWOOD TACKLES THE SLIPPERY SUBJECT OF PERSONAL LUBRICATION

**I used to think of lube as the answer to a problem, a sexual WD40**

can be traced back to an experience with the kind of cheap gloopy product that only a Silkwood shower can remove, a product so thick that it appears as if you're attempting to preserve your privates in aspic. One morning I over-did it with this particular gunk, dispensing more than the recommended "pea-sized" amount and soon I lay helplessly under a thick layer of ectoplasm, like a prone extra in *Ghostbusters*, while my partner attempted to excavate my important bits from beneath a layer of rapidly jellifying liquid silicone. Eventually I was released, but it seemed that despite a really thorough sluicing we hadn't gotten rid of it all. A day later, sitting on the bus, I suddenly, rapidly, slid down my seat.

Recently, however, I had cause to change my deeply-held anti-lube beliefs. On a shopping trip for massage oil I mistakenly purchased a bottle of the world's most expensive, entirely natural lube instead: the Gwyneth Paltrow of personal lubricants. Being too embarrassed to return it, I decided to give it a whirl. Let's just say it turned out to be a very happy accident, and I can highly recommend its non-sticky formula, perfect for occasions when you wish to "consciously uncouple". I was a convert.

The only fly in the lube is that I must now regularly return to the shop I got it from and this time buy it on

purpose. On this particular dry autumn day, a corseted assistant approaches immediately to ask if I need help. I affect my best blasé "yeah, I'm down with anal beads" demeanor and say as if it's the most natural thing in the world, which of course it is, "Yeah... just looking for your natural lube". She lights up, reeling off the various features and benefits of the range with the sort of enthusiasm usually reserved for selling a kettle in John Lewis. "This one really lasts, so it's great for anal." I must look unconvinced by Radiant Anal Bloom because she looks me in the eye and continues, "Or were you looking for something vaginal?" Her question hangs in the air above a display of crotchless pants. "This one is fine," I mumble as I grab one or other of the lubes and exit with haste.

Regular readers will of course have predicted that the lube I snatched was not the Gwyneth lube I'd been looking for. Alas, it was an entirely different lube, I discovered later that night, some time after the panic had died down and I realised that the burning I could feel was not a full-blown allergic reaction necessitating a trip to A&E. Rather it was the advertised "light tingling" sensation, a timely reminder that it's probably a good idea to always read the label and stick to the recommended "pea-sized" helping. I guess that's what you might call a hunka hunka burning lube. **D**



# Scene Queens by Queen Josephine 1 Michelle Manetti

For as long as I remember I've been passionate about music... despite being born in the Devils armpit (Croydon)



By 14 I'd started going clubbing in London with my 16 year old sister. It's a miracle our fake ID's got us in! But I'd truly caught the club bug...



I was always into singing-choirs, theatre groups etc. Then, whilst doing session singing I realised I wanted to create and produce my own tracks. Suddenly I'm in Brighton studying for a degree in music production...



But to know what makes a good record that gets a crowd going I knew I had to find out how a DJ knows a tune's going to work. So... what better way than learning how to DJ myself. Cue frantic ebay searching leading to a soggy exchange in a Southampton carpark.....



In January 2004, I did my first ever DJ set for Koochy at Tsar Bar, Brighton



More Brighton residencies followed at such venues as Candy Bar and I also kept on doing live vocal PA's alongside other DJs. Often I'd do a PA and a DJ set on the same night! These took me to the far East with Salvation & Ibiza with Red Square



In 2008 I moved up to London, got an agent and became a full-time DJ, playing at Girl Action, Wish, Dick & Fanny, Mint, OPP and Tiwat Boutique etc...



I also became Vocalist with 'The Off Key Hat', a production duo. Our first release on Dissident sold out, and further tracks were remixed by Yam Who? & Ashley Beedle. Plus I got to wear some great hats



In 2012 I launched my music blog Lipstick Disco to share my music with the world and create a platform for female DJ's to give their voice and be heard....



Today I still play in London and internationally and have, recently launched the club night Pitch Slap with Sandra from Dick & Fanny's



## READER'S REVIEW

## GOOD NIGHT ANTI-SNORING RING



Picture the scene: you and your beau are all cuddled up in bed, drifting into a delicious sleep, when you're rudely awoken by what sounds like a pneumatic drill. Your lady is a snorer. My wife reliably informs me that I am said pneumatic drill, and fed up of being woken from my slumber by a prod in the ribs or relegated to the sofa by guilt, I've taken matters into my own hands with this Anti-Snoring Ring. I know what you're thinking, mumbo jumbo hocus pocus, right? How can a ring worn on your little finger possibly stop you snoring? I felt the same way. But in the name of science, I followed the instructions and wore the ring for a week, each morning asking my long-suffering wife, "Did I snore last night?", and each morning, my sleep-deprived missus would nod yes. Undeterred, I carried on, until a few nights last week when I forgot to put it on. "Where's your snoring ring?" she asked. "Why?" I said. "Because your snoring has been awful the past few days. Go and get it." So there you have it. Maybe it does work, after all. Try it for yourself and get your own at Boots, Holland & Barratt, Amazon and more.

**Joanne Wilson**

[goodnightsnoring.com](http://goodnightsnoring.com)



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[treaclemoon.net](http://treaclemoon.net)

## CELEBRITY TWEETS

**@jaydeadams**

When you are with people who don't know that @David\_Cameron fucked a pig and you have the honour of telling them.

**@harto**

DOWNTON ABBEY HAS TAKEN OVER MY EVERYTHING

**@THEsaragilbert**

Red delicious are actually not the most delicious apples. Kind of an oversell. The honeycrisp doesn't go around bragging like that.

**@rubyrose**

My dog has a huge vagina and I'm only saying it before you all say it and make her self conscious.

**@zoelyons**

When John Paul Sartre declared that "Hell is other People" he had obviously never been bra shopping.

**@clarebalding**

How to make enemies of your neighbours: judge the local dog show. You make one person happy but the others will NEVER forgive you!

**@AngelHaze**

BLOOD MOON IS OPENING UP THE EMOTIONAL REALM RN.

**@katemoenning**

Dear rain, many thank you's. Now I don't have to go to soccer practice.

**@JenBrister**

This will literally be of no interest to anyone, but I've FINALLY updated my gig list on my website. I know, WHO CARES?

**@sophieannward**

If you feel helpless and overwhelmed by the human tragedy of the refugee crisis, small acts of kindness do matter.



## MEDIAWATCH WITH CARRIE LYELL

### WHO CARES ABOUT RACISM?



I found it incredibly disheartening that so few LGBT news outlets covered the anti-racism event that took

place in London last month. Held by DIVA in partnership with Stonewall, UK Black Pride, Rainbow Intersection and BlackOutLDN, the #EndLGBT Racism event was largely ignored in the gay press, besides a cursory mention by Pink News on the day of the event, which may as well have been copied and pasted from our own website.

Hey, challenging pernicious and overt racism that is endemic in our communities might not get as many clicks as boys in their pants, but to completely ignore it reinforces the divisions that have opened up and are growing deeper every day, and is inexcusable, as far as I'm concerned.

It's not gone unnoticed. At the event, which featured rousing debate chaired by UK Black Pride's Phyll Opoku-Gyimah, much was said about the failures of LGBT media to represent BAME people, leaving many in our community feeling vulnerable, isolated and angry. We're not blameless in this scenario, and at DIVA we know we need to do more to make sure the voices of queer people of colour are heard throughout the magazine. But we're trying, and that's more than can be said for other publications that routinely and unquestioningly prioritise the views of middle class, white, gay men, leaving everyone else – but particularly people of colour – on the fringes, battling for scraps of representation. That's not good enough.

At the meeting, Bisi Alimi of Rainbow Intersection said that racism in the LGBT community will never go away. That may be true. But with an LGBT media that completely ignores any attempt to address it, we're screwed.

@Seej

WORDS CARRIE LYELL, CHRISTIE BANNON

## WE CAN'T WAIT FOR

### SEXPO

The world's most diverse and inclusive sexual health and lifestyle exhibition is making its debut in the UK this November and we're beyond excited. Sexpo, which takes place at London's Olympia, is the largest event of its kind in the world, welcoming more than two and half million visitors, and promises a vibrant weekend of spellbinding performances, seminars and sexy catwalk shows. Open to all regardless of sexuality, Sexpo organisers have partnered up with DIVA to make sure the event is as inclusive as possible and are working hard on exhibits they hope will tantalise lesbian and bi women, including a spanking seminar by Shi!, burlesque performances, comedy, striptease and much more. The event also boasts some of the best adult retailers from the UK and beyond, inspiring and motivational workshops and classes and meet and greets with erotic authors as well as a range of after show parties to suit every taste. Sexpo takes place 13-15 November. See you there?

[sexpo.co.uk](http://sexpo.co.uk)



## PERSON OF THE MONTH

### SHONDA RHIMES

Shonda Rhimes is not just our person of the month, but our person of the decade. The American producer and writer has done more for lesbian and bisexual representation on TV in the last 10 years than anyone else and is still setting the bar that others are trying and failing to meet. This year, three of her shows – Grey's Anatomy, How To Get Away With Murder and Scandal – returned for new seasons, bringing with them no less than six lesbian and bi characters. And they're not token efforts, either. Rhimes knows how to create well-rounded characters that make us feel things, and her shows are the driving force for diversity. Take note, British TV, and take a bow, Shonda.







Sarah Waters  
appears at  
Homotopia on  
13 November,  
[homotopia.net](http://homotopia.net),  
and Glasgow  
Women's Library  
on 14 November,  
[womenslibrary.  
org.uk/events/list](http://womenslibrary.org.uk/events/list).



# “They’ve promised me aerial sex!”

It may have been 20 years now since the bulk of Sarah Waters’ debut *Tipping The Velvet* was written, but the novel’s still going strong, having just headed off on a brand new adventure, appearing on stage as a play, first stop London’s Lyric Hammersmith. When we meet, the adaptation has not yet begun its five-week run, but Waters tells me she has seen a partial run-through in the studio, where she was impressed by the production’s stagecraft. “It was great to see it,” she enthuses. “It should be lots of fun.”

Published in 1998, Waters’ novel about Nan King, the oyster-girl turned music hall star, has been adapted before, by screenwriter Andrew Davies for the BBC in 2002, raising Waters’ profile enormously. There’s since been a feature film of *Affinity* and television versions of *Fingersmith* and *The Night Watch*, no doubt bringing new readers to her work. “Adaptations give stories and characters another life,” she says, “even if they are in a slightly different form because it’s somebody else’s project.”

Adapted by playwright Laura Wade, *Tipping The Velvet* is a self-consciously theatrical play with plenty of interaction with the audience, Waters explains. With loads of props, costumes, dancing and music, it all sounds a perfect fit for the Lyric’s “gorgeous” Victorian interior. Does a rose get thrown? “Yes, of course!” she laughs. “And they’ve promised me aerial sex!” The idea of adapting the novel for the stage was first suggested some years ago by Sean Holmes, artistic director at the Lyric, who, having run the idea past Waters, got Wade on board to write. Olivier Award-winner Lyndsey Turner directs. Women’s sexuality in general is

not explored very much in theatre, Waters thinks, and indeed, it feels to her that there was more lesbian stuff on stage in the 1990s. She questions how significant *Tipping The Velvet* being on at the Lyric is in terms of increasing lesbian representation in theatre overall, but says it feels affirming that it’s being done at all. “It’s nice to think that it still has an appeal, it still has a kind of currency for women,” she says.

Waters has written for the stage herself, having collaborated on a partly-scripted, immersive play, *The Frozen Scream*, with performer Chris Green (AKA the brilliant Tina C) last year. Despite the lukewarm reviews, she loved the experience, which provided a well-timed break from the long slog of writing her sixth and most recent novel, *The Paying Guests*. “When I was in the midst of writing it, there were times when I thought, ‘Oh god, I don’t know if I’m ever going to be able to make this work,’” she remembers. “I lost confidence in myself, and I took a couple of wrong turnings with the book. I totally lost touch with whether it was any good, do you know what I mean?”

More than a year has passed since the book came out in hardback, and it seems that the consensus is that *The Paying Guests* is really rather good. Selling more than 200,000 copies in the UK alone, it’s been published in 21 languages and was shortlisted for the Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction. Set in 1920s London, the story of Frances and her life-disrupting paying guests Lilian and Leonard had critics on both sides of the Atlantic using words like “masterful”, “superb” and “bewitching”.

Asked if she’s been pleased with the response, Waters moves reflexive-

**DIVA CHECKS  
IN WITH THE  
AUTHOR OF  
THE PAYING  
GUESTS AND  
TIPPING THE  
VELVET**  
WORDS EDEN  
CARTER WOOD

ly to touch wood before laughing as she remembers she no longer needs to. “It was a really challenging book to write,” she says. “So the fact that it has had nice reviews has been extra exciting. I was so attached to this book, I still feel attached to it. It still feels very alive to me.”

She’s been busy promoting it since we last met, visiting the United States, Canada and the Jaipur Literary Festival in India, as well as events in Europe, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Among her last appearances before this comes to a halt is an appearance at Homotopia in Liverpool in November and another at the Women’s Library in Glasgow (see *info box opposite*), both of which “feel like special events”.

One of the questions asked at those events will likely be whether the next Sarah Waters book is underway. Happily, it is. She’s been mulling things over and doing bits of research, she says. “It’s more than an idea but it’s not quite an outline for the whole novel yet. So I might just start writing and see what happens.” She has decided on a time period, the early 1950s. “Partly because having set two books in the late 40s, I’m kind of intrigued about what came next,” she says. At this point she thinks the new book is “probably not going to be gay. It’s more a kind of family story really,” she explains, “but we’ll see... it could still change.” Either way, we’re looking forward to it. ☺

*The Paying Guests* is published by Virago and available now in paperback.

*Tipping The Velvet* is on at the Lyric Hammersmith until 24 October, [lyric.co.uk](http://lyric.co.uk), and at the Edinburgh Lyceum from 28 October to 14 November, [lyceum.org.uk](http://lyceum.org.uk).

“It’s nice to think that *Tipping The Velvet* still has an appeal for women”





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## NICHOLAS GODIN

*Contrepoint (Because)*

The solo debut by Air's Nicholas Godin is an imaginative tribute to both pianist Glenn Gould and classical composer Bach. As you'd expect, there are lush strings and deeply cinematic grooves but these are layered with playful piano, lovely guest vocals and occasional storms of electronic beats, breaks and bleeps. Immense fun.

## LARRY GUS

*I Need New Eyes (DFA)*

A former computer engineer, Larry Gus splices, chops and layers drumbeats, loops and vocal chants to create energetic and deeply rhythmic songs. There's elements of dub and Afrobeat but predominantly LG mashes together psychedelic pop, rock and electro into exceedingly catchy dance-friendly numbers.

IF YOU LIKE DESERT BLUES

## VIEUX FARKA TOURE & JULIA EASTERLIN

*Touristes (Six Degrees)*

One of the most inspired collaborations this year, Touristes features 10 songs beautifully performed by Malian singer and guitarist Vieux Farka Toure and US singer Julia Easterlin. There's six spellbinding originals that marry looped vocals with West African desert blues, alongside emotive, stripped back covers of seminal Dylan, Leadbelly and Fever Ray tracks.

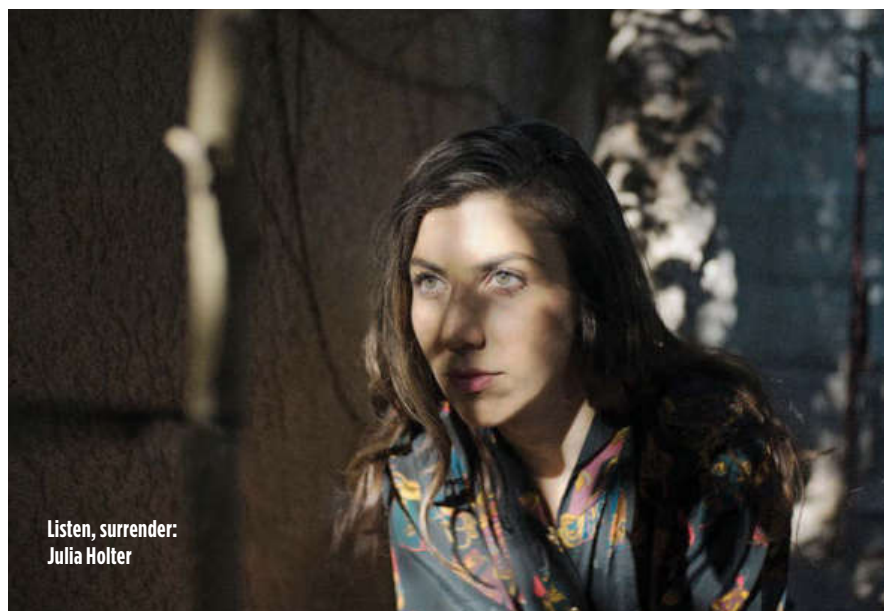
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## CRISTOBAL AND THE SEA

*Sugar Now (City Slang)*

A band for the iPod shuffle generation, Cristobal And The Sea make fun songs that weave together Brazilian bossa nova, Californian freak-folk and French loungebeat. From perfectly executed three-minute gems to five or six minutes of escalating percussion, fluttering flutes and mellow vocal harmonies.

SIN



Listen, surrender:  
Julia Holter

## JULIA HOLTER

*Have You In My Wilderness (Domino)*

Julia Holter has been making beautiful, otherworldly music since 2011's *Tragedy*. Produced by Cole Greif-Neill, *Wilderness* is her most sensual and swoonsome album to date. There are songs that sound like lost Dusty Springfield classics with soaring strings, rich horns and symphonic harmonies whilst others venture into Nico-esque, dream pop territory with warm piano, lush jazz percussion and sublime vocals. Listen, surrender, listen again.



## ROSEAU

*Salt (Big Dada)*

Like Georgia and Kate Tempest, Roseau writes songs that document being young, hungry and restless. Accelerate, New Glass and Hot Box layer lush vocals and atmospheric effects over deep bass and minimal beats whilst Lunch, Salt and Soon are more intimate songs that capture heartbreak and yearning with crystalline vocals and slow, glistening synths.



## THE SPOOK SCHOOL

*Try To Be Hopeful (Fortunata POP!)*

Glasgow quartet the Spook School sound like a glorious fusion of queercore, riot grrrl and C68 indie. Written by all four members, their smashing second album features bold DIY anthems fuelled by rawkous guitars, big hooks, noisy melodies and clever choruses that explore gender fluidity, sexuality, stereotypes and queer identity.



## KWAMIE LIV & ANGEL HAZE

*Pleasure This Pain*

DIVA favourites team up for this smouldering number with cool beats, lush vocals and freestyling raps.



## PIXX

*Fall In*

New 4AD artist Pixx fuses shimmering synths and ethereal, Cocteau Twins melodies with featherlight vocals on her impressive debut EP.



## VILLAGERS

*Hot Scary Summer*

Fab singer-songwriter Villagers gives us this catchy, quietly powerful love song that defies "all the pretty young homophobes looking for a fight".

3  
BEST TRACKS

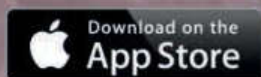


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# about

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## BROOKLYN

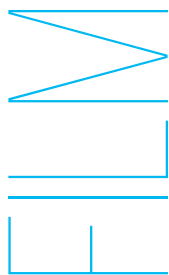
Dir John Crowley



"Feelgood" is a term usually used to describe shoddy rom coms, but it's the perfect adjective for this brilliant film, based on Colm Tóibín's book about a young Irish woman in 1950s America. Saoirse Ronan's Oscar-worthy performance takes protagonist Eilis from shy, homesick girl to confident adult, making tough decisions about the ties that bind. Well-pitched weepy moments sit alongside wry humour, including some excellent jokes about differing cultural approaches to swimsuits and spaghetti, and characters are beautifully drawn, including Jim Broadbent's soft-centred priest, Julie Walters' sweetly despotic landlady, and Eilis's drily funny fellow boarders, a generation of women taking on New York.

In cinemas 6 November

## ONLINE



Tangerine: complex and compelling

## TANGERINE

Dir Sean Baker

Causing a buzz at Sundance because of its shoe-string origins (it was shot on an iPhone 5s) and its use of trans actresses, *Tangerine* is not your average Christmas movie. Strutting through the LA sunshine, its leads Kitana "Kiki" Rodriguez (playing working girl Sin-Dee) and Mya Taylor (Alexandra) have a femmey swagger that's made for the camera, and while there's some slightly ropery acting early on, the duo's quest – to find the cis sex-worker messing with Sin-Dee's man – becomes increasingly complex and compelling. The film digs deep into a realistically difficult world, and there's a satisfying, if bleak, ending.

In cinemas 13 November

## THE DRESSMAKER

Dir Jocelyn Moorhouse



Kate Winslet's always a refreshing prospect, but she has an uphill struggle in this tone-deaf tragicomedy, gracefully presiding over broad slapstick, misjudged tragedy and strangely sentimental violence. If I didn't know about the novel, I'd have thought the story of a 1950s couturier, returning to a small Australian town to solve a murder, came out of a comic book – grotesque characters gibber and pout, emotions run high, but nothing makes very much sense. On the other hand, if you like a bit of camp, you might have fun with the sequences bringing high fashion to the bush, and cinema's fastest ever recovery from amnesia.

In cinemas 20 November

LGBT LIVES IN PAKISTAN  
POSHIDA

Blurring out the faces of many of its interviewees, this groundbreaking documentary explores the hidden lives of Pakistan's LGBT citizens, as they resist culturally sanctioned violence and nurture hopes for the future. Researched over several years, *Poshida* examines issues rarely addressed on film, including the legacy of homophobic colonial rule.

Find out more at [facebook.com/PoshidaFilm](https://facebook.com/PoshidaFilm)*PoshidaFilm*SPANISH LESBIAN COMEDY  
GIRL GETS GIRL

In this colourful, likeable comedy from director Sonia Sebastián, a lesbian philosopher causes chaos when she returns to the bosom of her chosen family. A cast of 12 funny women juggle slapstick silliness, romantic misunderstandings and jokes about heteros till you wish The L Word had been played for laughs.

Find out more at [girlgetsgirlthemovie.com](http://girlgetsgirlthemovie.com)THE POWER OF DRAG  
FIERCE

In June 2015, documentary filmmaker Zoe Davis was in Austin, Texas with a troupe of British drag artists, as they prepared to take part in the city's International Drag Festival. When the Supreme Court unexpectedly legalised gay marriage, Zoe kept her cameras rolling. Currently in post-production, *Fierce* is accepting Indiegogo funding into mid-November.

Fund *Fierce* at [indiegogo.com/projects/fierce-a-film-about-drag-art-and-change](http://indiegogo.com/projects/fierce-a-film-about-drag-art-and-change)

## ONLINE

MUSIC  
MILEY'S BOX

Check out the controversial and far from subtle song from our favourite guilty pleasure, Miley Cyrus. Titled *Bang Me Box*, this explicit ode to lesbian sex is almost too graphic – even for us. [tinyurl.com/DIVABang](http://tinyurl.com/DIVABang)

EVENT  
SEXPO 2015

- Sexpo, the world's largest sex and lifestyle exhibition, is coming to the UK for the first time ever in November and they've partnered up with DIVA to make it the most inclusive event yet.
- [sexpo.co.uk](http://sexpo.co.uk)

GIFTS  
WET FOR HER

- A sex-toy brand designed for lesbians, by lesbians? Yes please.
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- [eu.wetforher.com](http://eu.wetforher.com)



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## DON'T MISS JUNIOR BAKE OFF



If the sugar comedown from *The Great British Bake Off* is too much for you to bear, console yourself with the kids' version. It's pretty much the same as its adult counterpart, but without the innuendo. Former *DIVA* cover star, chef and food writer Allegra McEvedy joins pastry chef Graham Hornigold to judge 40 of the country's best mini-bakers. Yummo!

CBBC, November

## WE LOVE EMPIRE



Season two of the brilliant drama started on E4 earlier this month and has taken over our lives. The show received record viewing figures when it premiered on Fox in the US, and for good reason. Treat yourself to a binge now.

E4, Tuesdays, 9pm

## COMING SOON A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM



We're very excited about Russell T Davies' adaptation of this Shakespeare classic, which features a stellar cast including Maxine Peake and Matt Lucas. "This is such an exciting range of actors from stage and screen, from wild comedy to high drama, and some making their first ever appearance on camera," says Russell.

# NOVEMBER



The Bill on the beach? Members of the cast of *Cuffs* get ready to bring the drama to BBC1

## CUFFS

Not since *Sun Hill* got its first lesbian storyline have we been this hyped about a police drama. *Cuffs*, a visceral new series following eight coppers in Brighton, is vibrant, exhilarating, action-packed and emotional – and that was just the trailer. Yes, it's got lesbians in it, but that's not the only reason we'll be watching. We're far more interested in the booby-trapped cannabis farms, middle-class dog-napping and pensioner fisticuffs over deckchairs, thank you very much. Want to know more? Turn to p48 to find out what *Cuffs* star Eleanor Matsuura had to tell *DIVA* about the drama, which hits BBC1 later this month.

BBC1, October



## WHAT WE'RE WATCHING ORPHAN BLACK

It's been a long time coming, but season three of our sci-fi favourite is finally back on our screens. Catch up with Sarah, Cosima and all your favourite clones, played by Tatiana Maslany, as they struggle to survive against the menace of Castor. The show, which gave 30-year-old Maslany a well-deserved Emmy nomination, is now filming its fourth season and word on the street is it'll take the clones in a "horrifying new direction". We're terrified but excited.

Catch up now on BBC iPlayer



## WE CAN'T WAIT FOR JESSICA JONES

Here at *DIVA* HQ we are counting the days until the launch of Marvel's *Jessica Jones*, the second of four live-action adventure series to premiere on Netflix. Featuring an amazing cast (Krysten Ritter, David Tennant, Carrie-Anne Moss, to name but a few), the series sees Jones rebuilding her professional and private life following a tragic ending to her superhero career. There's also some sapphic storylines in there, so make sure you're watching.

Netflix, 20 November



# RED HOT

2016

BY THOMAS KNIGHTS

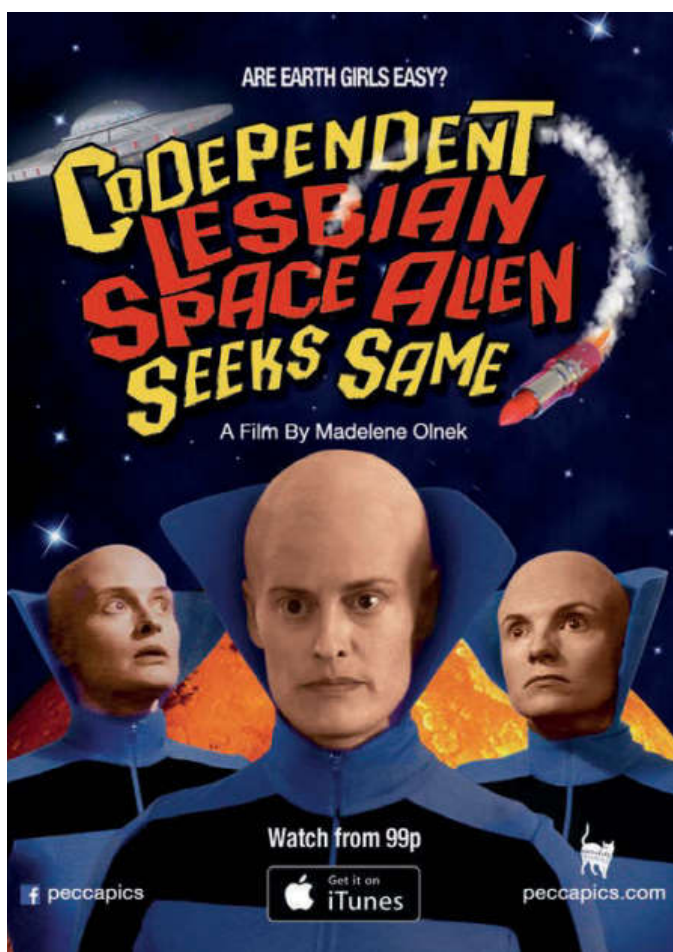


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POP CULTURE  
**ROBOT TAKEOVER**

Ana Matronic

Who could have guessed that Scissor

Sisters singer Ana Matronic loves robots? In this very enjoyable guide she introduces 100 of her favourite iconic machines, everyone from K9 to Seven Of Nine, so we may better know our potential rivals come the revolution.

Cassell Illustrated, £14.99



MEMOIR  
**TRANS: A MEMOIR**

Juliet Jacques

Journalist Juliet Jacques' memoir begins in 2000, a decade before she

began writing about her sex reassignment surgery for the Guardian. Here she brings together the personal and the cultural in a forthright account of her own journey and Britain's gender political landscape.

Verso, £16.99



ANTHOLOGY  
**GHOST**

Ed Louise Welsh

Fans of sleepless nights will covet this beautiful, heavy hardback of 100 creepy stories, full of

classics of the ghost story genre including one each from Tove Jansson, Jackie Kay and Ali Smith. At one a day it'll keep you awake for months.

Head of Zeus, £20



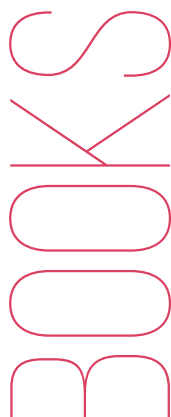
TEEN ROMANCE  
**WHAT WE LEFT BEHIND**

Robin Talley

The author of 1950s-set interracial love story *Lies We Tell Ourselves* is back

with a story about present day teens Toni and Gretchen, whose rock solid high school relationship is thrown into question when they head off to Harvard and NYU respectively, and Toni comes out as genderqueer.

Mira Ink, £6.99



MEMOIR

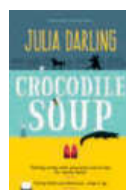
**SPECTACLES**

Sue Perkins

Great news for Sue Perkins fans: she's written a book and it's really rather good. Beginning more or less at Sue's birth, an event succinctly diarised by her mother, we're taken through a slightly pet-obsessed Croydon childhood and on to Cambridge where Sue met comedy partner Mel Giedroyc in 1988. There follow many tales from the comedy circuit and Sue's extensive television career to date, along with stories about friends, family, pooches and other relationships along the way.

Sue's clearly a talented writer, but what makes *Spectacles* special is that, as anyone who watched her recently aired *Kolkata* programme can confirm, that familiar self-deprecating, pun-loving sense of humour isn't the only gear she's got. *Spectacles'* many laughs are punctuated with revealing moments of real tenderness and reflection that not only make you feel you're getting to know the author, but find you occasionally turning your gaze back on your own life and relationships. Great stuff. *Read an extract on p50.*

Michael Joseph, £20



FICTION

**CROCODILE SOUP**

Julia Darling

Recently reissued British lesbian classic – it made the Orange Prize long list in 1998 – in which the narrator, isolated museum worker Gert, tells of her surreal childhood and love for colleague Eva. An odd, funny, touching story about the desire for love and acceptance.

Mayfly, £7.99



SHORT FICTION

**FLY AWAY HOME**

Marina Warner

Playful tales of love, jealousy and revenge in a classic contemporary style make up this new collection of stories from the feminist writer, historian and Dame, in which her ongoing interest in mythology, fairytales, nursery rhymes and the like is deeply evident. May contain mermaids.

Salt, £8.99



SHORT FICTION

**DON'T LOOK NOW**

Daphne du Maurier

I accidentally watched the world's most menacing film, *Don't Look Now*, on TV aged eight and have never recovered. Du Maurier's original tale of the Venetian haunting of bereaved parents is re-released here with four other supernatural tales in a beautiful hardback edition, ideal for Halloween.

Virago Modern Classics, £14.99



# Winterson's Tale

Jeanette Winterson's latest novel is the first in a series of eight reimaginings of Shakespeare by popular novelists, timed to coincide with the 400th anniversary of the Bard's death. A couple of chapters into her reworking of *The Winter's Tale*, we find her version of jealous, paranoid King Leontes in bed with his best friend Xeno, wondering aloud whether or not Elvis was gay. By this point, if you hadn't already, you realise you're not in Sicilia any more. Set after the financial crash, and featuring many potent symbols of modern life – city bankers, video games, girl groups – Winterson's novel picks up Shakespeare's romance-slash-problem play, and, alert to the many gaps in that source text, runs with it.

"There's a lot of anxiety around the idea of what's original," Winterson says when I ask what appeals to her about cover versions. "And in fact, what's original is what you do with what already exists. It's not about 'has this thing ever been thought before, or talked about before or rendered to the public before?', because the answer is 'of course it has' but it's how you bring things forward and reshape them for generations. The big questions are always there," she adds. "People always worry about who they love, will they be betrayed, will they go into exile; none of that ever changes." In *The Winter's Tale*, she says, nothing is explained by Shakespeare. "At no stage can we see inside the motives, the minds of the characters." It seemed obvious to her that she needed to go into those gaps to tell the story.

Of all Shakespeare's plays, *The Winter's Tale*, long a talismanic text for her,

JEANETTE WINTERSON TALKS TO EDEN CARTER WOOD ABOUT REWORKING THE BARD, LOVE, ORIGINALITY, AND SECOND CHANCES

"This is a new chapter of my life, full of possibility"

was an immediate choice. It's a play about an abandoned child, "So, you know, I was in there straight away!" she laughs. "That's a motif that's always going to work powerfully for me. How could it not?" But it's also a story about redemption, about second chances and the agency of time, she explains; "Not time the destroyer, but time that makes space for reflection."

The idea of redemptive change is one that clearly interests her. "We live in a necrotic society which has pretty much run out of ideas," she says, "a society that is broken and rapacious and unfair, and relies on wars to stimulate the economy." She cites changes over the past 30 years in sexual politics and gay rights as signs that positive change can happen, that generational shifts can move things on. "You have to believe that there is a chance of doing it better."


The play's possibilities for second chances open up as Leo's exiled daughter Perdita returns, now a teenager. "The trope of the play is 'that which is lost will be found'," Winterson says. "Shakespeare got to a point at the end of his working life when he was very interested in second chances, and I guess I am too. Maybe it happens when you get older? Perhaps because you are more grateful for your own second chances. You realise that it's the only way that anybody gets anywhere because the first time around we always fuck it up," she laughs.

If the novel is concerned with serious matters, it is also playful and bawdy and full of surprises, with a few LGBT touches for good measure, including a new trans character named Lorraine LaTrobe. Winterson also "chucked in" a founding girl group called HollyPollyMolly. "In the

pastoral scene Shakespeare had all these shepherdesses running around, and I thought, no, we can't have that," Winterson explains of the girl group's origins. "There's an exuberance to the play, a certain madness to it, and I wanted to keep that."

It is, however, overwhelmingly a thought-provoking novel, bursting with questions. What is memory but a painful dispute with the past? Can you ever really know another human being? As with other Winterson novels, to read it is to be ready to engage with an interrogation of the human condition.

"I'm preoccupied with the same stuff," she says. "How we love and how we learn to love. It's not like walking, it's more like language; it's something you need to learn in the sense that it needs to be around you. You need to hear it. Love is something you can't do on your own, it's not an isolated act and yet this most important and central part of our lives is continually left to chance in a way that's completely irresponsible." This is one of the reasons the world's in such bad shape, she contends. "Love is at the centre of everything and yet we don't seem to accept that we need lessons in love, from very early on."

Speaking of love, Winterson's recent marriage to psychotherapist Susie Orbach hasn't escaped DIVA's attention, and before we finish up I take a moment to offer the author our collective congratulations. "Thanks," she says, sounding happy. "This is a new chapter in my life, full of possibility. I really am the lucky one," she adds. "She's fab, and this is great." 

Jeanette Winterson's new novel *The Gap Of Time* is available now in hardback from Hogarth Shakespeare, £16.99.







KESIENA  
BOOM IS  
A LESBIAN.  
JUST DON'T  
CALL HER  
FLUID, QUEER  
OR LABEL-FREE

When I was in secondary school being called a lesbian was meant to evoke two things: shame in myself and disgust in others. A lesbian was someone who was null and void, excluded from the accepted as essential rituals of heteronormativity.

A lesbian was undesirable and ugly. A lesbian turned to girls out of desperation, a last resort, because men didn't want her. A lesbian was to be regarded with suspicion by straight girls and as a peculiar affront to straight men. A lesbian was lesser because she could not be "made whole" by sexual and romantic association with a man.

Eventually I pushed the weight of straight society's view of lesbianism off my back and stopped forcing myself into trying to conjure up attraction towards men simply because that was what was expected of me. Now, aged 21, I take immense pride in my lesbian identity and relish my separation from the standard narrative of womanhood. I'm stubbornly protective of the lesbian label and what it means to me – much more so in the last few months as I've seen its popularity and status in the LGBTQ+ community decline.

A survey of 85,000 people by the woman-only dating app Her found that there has been a near 20% drop in people claiming the lesbian label in the last year, whereas those opting for "no label" increased by nearly 10 times; and a recent *Broadly* documentary about the decline of lesbian bars (presented by JD Samson of *Le Tigre*) mentioned that fewer women are calling themselves lesbians. This echoes my personal experience, as I know a dizzying amount of people in the LGBTQ+ community but I would struggle

Say my name

to count 10 who identify as straight up dykes. Instead, most people I know, even if they solely date other women have opted to call themselves “queer”.

I definitely feel a sense of duty to keep the lesbian label alive, in part to honour the badass dykes like Audre Lorde who came before me and whose existence made mine possible, and in part because I feel that naming my woman-exclusive sexuality is vitally important in our misogynistic world. Furthermore, as a politically active feminist who recognises the absolute validity of trans women’s womanhood, I also call myself a lesbian to squash the “era of queer” myth that lesbians are archaic, irrelevant and transphobic relics of the past who can’t be trusted to contribute to liberation.

If we continue the current trend to move towards “non-labels” that obscure the specifics of our gender and orientation, it is women (as always) who will suffer the most. Let’s be real, the “LGBTQ+ community” is very often a stand-in for “cisgender white gay men community”. It is gay men who dominate “our” scene, it is gay men who have lots of pubs and clubs and physical spaces dedicated to them and their needs, whilst lesbians are left with rapidly closing dyke bars and whole swathes of erased history. It is so important for women-loving-women to have spaces centred on legitimising our lives – as our attractions and desires have long been dismissed, downplayed, targeted or hypersexualised. If we cannot name our attraction as lesbians, how will we carve out the woman-centred socialising and support spaces we need? The first step to organising and to a collective source of strength is a shared name. Saying “I just don’t care about labels” harms our ability to find our people. How do we create solidarity and sisterhood without a cohesive identity?

Lesbians face derision from all angles – we still need physical places to have as our own, to name as our own and in which to build community.

Women’s marginalisation is not the sole preserve of the heterosexual world and if we do not clearly label ourselves we run the risk of being women who love women who are invisibilised in our own community.

I call myself a lesbian in order to make it clear that I am not for consumption by men. I do not exist to be subsumed. I am a woman who’s made strong by other women. A woman free from the binds of men. “Queer” is too ambiguous for me. I appreciate its usefulness and existence in the world but I feel like it’s swallowed up dykes in its all-encompassing jaws. It is applied to us all whilst ignoring the fact that it is undoubtedly a slur, used historically and today to demean and harass LGBT+ people and lots of lesbians have no wish to be referred to in such a way. “Queer” is hailed as the most radical way to identify since it positions itself as non-normative and boundary breaking. But what exactly is radical about the erasure and obfuscation of women’s specific sexuality? A sexuality that we’ve fought so hard to have recognised and validated!

I think that women who would have once called themselves lesbians are steering away from the word and its heavily gendered meaning and opting for queer because of a wider fixation on “masculinity-as-gender neutrality-as-radicalism” in the queer scene. There are currently more people than ever who were assigned female at birth and who present in a masculine way who shun the label of “woman” (and with it the label of lesbian) and instead identify as gender-queer or non-binary or gender-fluid. In and of itself this is not a bad thing at all, people being more comfortable to take ownership of their gender and live a life which feels more authentic to them is to be lauded.

But, frustratingly, these identities are placed at the top of the “most radical” queer hierarchy. These thin white queers with their naturally androgynous bodies are seen as the epitome of queerness. They alone

are seen as the face of a more radical future simply because they combine masculinity (which is unfairly glorified in straight and gay culture alike) with a “gender neutral” identity.

The assumption now held by many queers is that all masculine women are actually genderqueer or non-binary. So we have situations where a butch woman is looked down on for “aping men” or reinforcing gender norms, but if she were to identify as genderqueer (which does not necessitate having dysphoria, changing pronouns or anything beyond self-identification) then suddenly she is radical and respected. I believe this to be the deification of queerness as something that has to be separated from womanhood, which is gross and lesbophobic. It suggests that womanhood is inherently less worthy as a political class for social change. The distaste for “woman” as an identity and the assumption that it is somehow lesser is just a mirror of straight, patriarchal society. There is nothing radical about that.

The obsession with (gender)queerness is exacerbating the internalised misogyny many LBT women already feel as a result of living in heterosexist patriarchal society and it is harming lesbian identity. There is an unwillingness to accept that there is still the potential for radical queerness from people who are simply women. What is more radical than women loving women and being content without men, in a world which systematically devalues us and glorifies men at every turn?

And so I am a lesbian, not queer. I am a lesbian, not “label free”. I am fighting back against the diminishing of women’s sexuality and identity. I am carrying on a legacy that I don’t want to be forgotten or pushed aside.

I am a lesbian. Deal with it. **D**

Saying “I just don’t care about labels” harms our ability to find our people

Read more at [kesienaboom.com](http://kesienaboom.com) and @KesienaBoom.

What are you thinking? Tweet @DIVAmagazine or email [letters@divamag.co.uk](mailto:letters@divamag.co.uk)





Still from **The Weird Girls Project** Episode 16 **#EmbraceYourself**

# Weird and wonderful



She's wanted: **Kitty Von-Sometime**

Recently voted one of the people Icelanders would most like to have sex with, by one of the island's national newspapers, Kitty Von-Sometime is about to lose even more of her precious anonymity with the international release this month of a documentary film about her artistic practice and work. *I Want To Be Weird* has already been nominated as Best Nordic Documentary at Nordisk Panorama. "It's being released any minute and it's freaking me out," says Von-Sometime, with a nervous laugh. "It's way more personal than I thought it would be."

The artist is best known for the *Weird Girls Project*, which grew out of her annoyance with her friends' obsession with how they looked and their negative body image. Each episode has its own unique message, taken from an inspiring statement or a media comment on the female form, and is set to a song. Shot all in one day, but with months of preparation, editing and post-production by the meticulous Von-Sometime, the women featured turn up on the day with no idea what to expect. For the most recent episode,

**ANNA MCNAY  
DISCOVERS  
KITTY VON-  
SOMETIME'S  
WEIRD GIRLS  
PROJECT**

**#EmbraceYourself**, they were covered from head to toe in gold glitter and instructed to move about to music in a mirrored warehouse filled with black volcanic sand. The result is visually stunning and each and every body is as gorgeous as it is natural.

Born in Devon, Von-Sometime has lived in Iceland since 2006. She regularly works abroad and is currently plotting ideas for Sweden and New Zealand. In 2011, the Icelandic branch of UN Women chose the *Weird Girls Project* as a way to visually announce their name-change. Her very personal work, *Opus/You Again* (2014), was made as an expression of her feelings about living in Iceland after choosing to stay there with her daughter – as a wonderful place to raise a child, as well as the home of her daughter's father – and thus losing her wife, who returned to the US. When her heart finally thaws, it looks like there is a long queue already forming... **D**

[kittyvonsometime.tumblr.com](http://kittyvonsometime.tumblr.com)  
[vimeo.com/kittyvonsometime](http://vimeo.com/kittyvonsometime)  
[theweirdgirlsproject.com](http://theweirdgirlsproject.com)



Still from **The Weird Girls Project** Episode 4 **Bunny Revolution**



Still from **Opus** (2014)



# SAPPHIC SUFFRAGETTES

THE FILM SUFFRAGETTE IS EXPECTED TO PROMPT A NEW INTEREST IN THE WOMEN WHO FOUGHT FOR OUR RIGHT TO VOTE. HILARY MCCOLLUM PUTS THE LESBIANS AND BI WOMEN IN THE MOVEMENT UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

"Miss Browne is sleeping in Annie's room now."

So wrote Mary Blathwayt when ousted from the bed of suffragette Annie Kenney. Mary had met Annie at a women's suffrage meeting and adored her from the start. She was not the only one. At least two other suffragettes, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and Clare Mordan, said they had fallen in love with Annie the first time they met her.

The nature of these relationships concerned some in the movement. After the vote was won, Teresa Billing-ton-Greig said, "There was an immediate and strong emotional attraction between Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and Annie Kenney... indeed so emotional and so openly paraded that it frightened me. I saw it as something unbalanced and primitive and possibly dangerous to the movement".

Annie Kenney was a mill worker from Oldham who joined the Women's Social And Political Union (the militant suffragette organisation founded by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters) after hearing Christabel Pankhurst speak at a suffrage meeting in 1905. Annie was drawn to Christabel who invited her to come to tea the next Saturday. She said: "The following week I lived on air, I simply could not eat... It was as though half of me was present, where the other half was I never asked."

Annie and Christabel became inseparable and were soon the first

Hilary McCollum is the author of *Golddigger*, a novel spanning the California gold rush and the Irish famine, available from [bellabooks.com](http://bellabooks.com) and [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

Annie Kenney and Christabel Pankhurst pictured soon after their arrest together in 1905



women to be arrested in the suffrage cause after unfurling a banner at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester saying, "Will you give Votes for Women?" They were violently ejected but were only arrested after Christabel spat at a police officer to ensure the publicity they sought. Christabel was sentenced to a week in prison and Annie to three days. It was the first of Annie's many detentions.

Annie Kenney was not the only woman believed to have a relationship with Christabel Pankhurst. Grace Roe was captivated by Christabel when she heard her speak in Hyde Park in 1908. She joined the movement and became one of Christabel's most trusted confidants. Grace became the WSPU's chief organiser in 1913, disguising herself as a chorus girl to evade arrest. The struggle for the vote had become increasingly violent and Grace established the Bodyguard, a group of women whose role was to provide security at rallies, protect the leadership and help suffragettes to escape. Members were selected for their courage and capacity to act quickly. Many were lesbians. They were secretly trained in jiu-jitsu and fought police hand-to-hand to prevent the arrest of Emmeline Pankhurst, Annie Kenney and other leaders.

Olive Bartels was a "close friend" of Grace Roe's and a member of the Bodyguard. In 1913 she acted as a decoy in an elaborate ruse to help Emmeline Pankhurst escape from under the noses of Scotland Yard detectives. The following year she organised a suffragette meeting that came to be known as the Battle of Glasgow. The police had surrounded St Andrew's





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Hall and stationed 50 constables in the basement and detectives in the hall to try to prevent Emmeline Pankhurst from addressing a public meeting. Nevertheless, she managed to enter the building in disguise and began to speak from the stage. The police stormed the hall but members of the Bodyguard drew wooden Indian clubs from underneath their dresses and went into battle. Officers tried to gain the stage but were deterred by barbed wire hidden in suffragette floral garlands edging the platform. The Bodyguard were vastly outnumbered and eventually the police's force of numbers won out and Emmeline Pankhurst was dragged away under arrest. But the bravery of the Bodyguard against police brutality helped galvanise support for the cause.

One of the few suffragettes still remembered today, Emily Wilding Davison, is also believed to have had lesbian relationships. Emily was fatally injured attempting to attach the suffragette colours to the King's horse at the Derby on 4 June 1913. Her grave is marked with a marble open book, which was carried in the hearth with her coffin, bearing the words: 'veritable princess of spirituality. From a loving Aberdeen friend.'

Emily's close friend, Mary Leigh, pinned Emily's hunger strike medal to her body and put a copy of Walt Whitman poems in her dead hands. The poetry collection is significant. Whitman was a gay poet and the Christ before her death, Emily gave Mary a copy of the same collection. The words, "the institution of the dear love of comrades," were underlined along with several other quotes suggesting romantic attachment.

Mary Leigh had married in her late teens and was an active suffragette by the time she was 20. Her maiden name was Mary Brown, the name that Emily took as an alias whenever she was arrested. Several of Emily's arrests resulted from protests at how the courts and prisons were treating M. After Emily's death, Mary made the pilgrimage from London to her grave in Morpeth every year, draped in the suffragette flag that Emily had with her at the Derby. It is clear that these

two women were passionate about each other.

There is evidence of a significant lesbian presence within the suffragette movement but, as with the Mary Blathwayt diaries, it is often a matter of reading between the lines. Annie Kenney's elderly son disputed the suggestion that his mother had lesbian relationships when the diaries came to light in 2000. But Annie herself hints at same-sex relationships in her auto-

biography, saying that there was "no one to say what we should do or what we should not do, no family ties, we were free and alone in a great brilliant city, scores of young women scarcely out of their teens met together in a revolutionary movement, outlaws or breakers of laws, independent of everything and everybody, fearless and self-confident".

For some figures we will probably never have definitive proof but others have left a clearer record. Dame Ethel Smyth, composer of suffragette anthem *The March Of The Women*, discussed her relationships with women in her autobiographies. Ethel joined the movement when she was 52 after meeting and falling in love with leader Emmeline Pankhurst. They frequently shared a room and Emmeline left a message for Ethel when she feared she would die on hungerstrike.

Emmeline Pankhurst's chauffeur, Vera Holme, was also known to be a lesbian. She was an actress who often played male roles. On holiday she wore men's suits but restricted herself to a severe women's skirt in Britain, at least in public. In one publicity stunt, Vera hid in the large pipe organ at Bristol's Colston Hall in advance of a meeting to be addressed by a Cabinet Minister. When the minister began his speech he was interrupted by her disembodied voice calling out "Votes for Women!" In 1911 Vera began a relationship with fellow suffragette Evelina Haverfield, which lasted until Evelina's death.

After the First World War a number of leading suffragettes became more open about their sexuality. Rachel Barrett had been editor of *The Suffragette* newspaper. In the 1920s she lived with her lover, Ida Wylie. They were both close friends of Radclyffe Hall and advised and supported her during the obscenity trial following the publication of *The Well Of Loneliness*.

Lesbians and bi women were crucial to the success of the suffragette movement. They were in the thick of the fight, standing up to a repressive government. It is time for us to reclaim these heroines and celebrate their ingenuity and courage. **D**

Suffragette is in cinemas now.



The suffragette memorial in Christchurch Gardens, London



Cuffs is a fresh, authentic, contemporary eight-part police series created for BBC1 by Julie Gearey. Packed full of humour and humanity, it's a fast-paced and visceral drama portraying the everyday rollercoaster of life as a police officer in the UK. We caught up with Eleanor Matsuura, who plays lesbian cop Donna Prager, to find out more.

**DIVA: Your CV is pretty extensive! What might DIVA readers recognise you from?**

**ELEANOR MATSUURA:** Utopia, I guess. I did a film of Spooks earlier on this year, which was a movie made from the TV show. God, I'm trying to think what on earth I've done. Isn't that terrible? First question out of the gate and I'm like, "Oh no!"

**There's a lot of anticipation and excitement around your new show, Cuffs. What's it all about?**

Cuffs is a police drama that mainly follows the work and life of eight police officers in and around Brighton. It really embraces everything the city is, with the gay community being the heart of it. I play Donna Prager who is one of the response officers on the team. How would I describe her? She is a very tenacious, tough, passionate woman. She has these two great loves in her life – one being her job and one being her girlfriend – and as the series progresses you see her getting torn at times between these two things.

**How is Donna's sexuality handled in the show?**

I'd say it's not the most interesting thing about her at all, in the best possible way. I spoke a lot about this with the writers and producers of Cuffs. It's a police show. It's a show about each character and their dramas. Some of those characters are gay, some of the characters are straight. For me personally... I really thought that was a brilliant opportunity. We certainly don't have enough diversity on British television, and I think when you have gay relationships like that when it's not necessarily part of a "gay show", it's a wonderful and refreshing opportunity to [show] real life. I was really proud of how Julie's written the characters, actually.

**Mainstreaming seems to be the trend in TV these days.**

It can be more powerful, in a way. By not making it a huge issue and it becoming part of the norm, which it absolutely should be, I think there's great power in that and it's good storytelling. When that's not the main event, it leaves room for so much more to be fleshed out of the characters.

**Donna sounds like a very interesting character. How do you choose the kind of characters you play?**

It's important to me that the women I play are complex and well thought out and have more than one dimension to them. That's what I strive for, but I tend to get the tough characters. I tend to play baddies quite a lot or the classic "bitch in a suit", as I always call it [laughs]. But, actually, with Donna it's a real departure for me. She's one of the most well-rounded, grounded characters that I've ever played. She's really sorted in a lot of ways and is a real rock for a lot of the other characters in the show. She's certainly got a toughness to her, there's no doubt about it, and a tenacity to her. But we also see her vulnerabilities too, and how much those vulnerabilities are exposed in her relationship with her girlfriend because she just adores her so much. There's a lot of things that happen later on in the series – without giving away too much – that compromises their relationship and I think that's when you really get to see the softer side of Donna. It's great that we get to see all those different sides to her, because often in TV the characters aren't as well written or as well thought out as that. So that was the real pull for me.

**You teased a little there about Donna's relationship, and it seems it might not all be plain sailing. There's been a huge backlash recently against shows like Last Tango In Halifax, Corrie, Emmerdale and so on, killing off their lesbians. Please tell us Cuffs avoids those tragic lesbian tropes!**

What is that with TV shows killing off lesbian characters!? What is that about? It's kind of shocking to me. It does seem to be the most ridiculous trend. I don't think I'm giving anything away by saying that no, we don't kill off the lesbians in Cuffs [laughs]. Mind you, we don't know if we're going to

**ACTRESS ELEANOR MATSUURA TELLS DIVA ABOUT NEW POLICE DRAMA CUFFS AND WHY IT'S GOING TO AVOID THOSE PESKY "TRAGIC LESBIAN" TROPES**

**WORDS** CARRIE LYELL

**"When I say I'm playing a gay role on the BBC at 8 o'clock, people still refer to Brookside and that kiss"**

series two yet so don't hold me to that! What I think Julie's done so brilliantly is write a police drama that avoids cliches, which is quite an achievement in itself [laughs]. So I think if we can do that and we can also avoid the cliché of killing off the lesbian, then break out the champagne. Champagne for everybody!

**Cuffs is already being praised as one of the most diverse series on British TV. How was that achieved, and what lessons can other shows learn?**

I think it's funny, you know, when I talk to people about playing a gay character and I talk to people about it being on the BBC at 8 o'clock, so many people refer to Brookside and that kiss. Or occasionally they'll refer to Queer As Folk, and I can't help but think, "God, they were a long time ago". It's kind of amazing to me that we are still using those as benchmarks. Not because they weren't brilliant shows or brilliant moments in their own right, because I think they were, but time has passed. We should be having new points of reference and new inspirations and hopefully Cuffs will be [part] of that. It's not rocket science. We just need to write more parts with more interesting, more inclusive characters. It's as simple as that. Things are changing, we're starting to have the right conversations. It's just that often they move at such a glacial pace and it seems like you're taking one step forward and 10 steps back. Having said that, a lot of the stuff I've been doing this year is really encouraging. I'm about to do A Midsummer Night's Dream which is a new adaptation for the BBC [by] Russell T Davis and I really can't give too much away, but there's a twist. He's tweaked some of the relationships between certain characters to include a prominent gay relationship in it, and it's awesome. It's such an interesting choice and it really adds to the show. I've seen over the years, as I'm sure many people have, a dozen versions of A Midsummer Night's Dream, and it's the first time this character has made sense to me. It can be done, and it can be done to make things better, to make things more relevant, and to make things more interesting. 🍷

Catch Eleanor in Cuffs on BBC1 later this month.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a black police tactical vest, is shown from the chest up. She is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. A body camera is clipped to her vest, displaying the brand name 'REVEALmedia' and the model 'RS3-SX'. The background consists of a metal grid fence and a grey wall with some equipment.

# Off the Cuff



# SPECTACULAR SUE



## Spectacles

a memoir

## SUE PERKINS

CARRIE LYELL  
INTRODUCES  
AN EXTRACT  
FROM SUE  
PERKINS'  
HILARIOUS  
AND MOVING  
NEW BOOK,  
IN WHICH SUE  
SUSPECTS  
SHE IS THE  
VICTIM OF A  
HATE CRIME...

In the age of the humblebrag, Sue Perkins is quite something. The national treasure has finely tuned her self-deprecation over the course of her career and it shows no sign of slipping. In *Spectacles*, her delightful memoir, she'd be forgiven for blowing her own trumpet rather spectacularly, but instead she downplays almost every success in her life, and pretty much predicts *Spectacles* will sit on supermarket shelves gathering dust.

But judging by the reaction the book has had to date, that couldn't be further from the truth. *Spectacles* has generated headline after headline, from the heartbreaking story about discovering she couldn't have children because of a benign brain tumour, to the utterly shocking revelation that she once had a relationship with a chap called Rob.

There's more to this memoir than the headlines, though, and *Spectacles* is worth forking out for. Like Sue, it's funny. See our extract for proof. But there are also tales of love, loss and heartbreak woven in there with exceptional talent, proving that Sue is so much more than a comedian or a cake aficionado. This book completely reinforces her position as our favourite lesbian. Long may she reign. **D**

*Spectacles, A Memoir*, by Sue Perkins is in bookshops now.

## THE COCK AND THE CAR

I was wandering back from work one afternoon when I noticed my car had been vandalized. There were deep key marks down the length of one side, right down to the metal. It wasn't a posh car, just a dusty, knackered old Mark 4 Golf ('rides like a Thai prostitute!' – Top Gear Magazine) but I loved it. As I wandered around to the front, it became clear that the damage wasn't just limited to a cursory keying – this was full-on vandalism. There, on the bonnet of the car, scratched deep, was a cock.

A cock. I couldn't believe it. A cock. On my car. A lovingly drawn shaft and helmet scored for all time into my beloved jalopy.

I went inside. My younger girlfriend was sat, dressed like Cinderella's Buttons, listening to white noise with a lady yodelling on top. Young people, honestly.

'What's up, honey?' she called.

'It's my car. Someone's defaced my car. They've drawn a cock on it.'

'It's London, babe,' she said, breezily. swaying her head in time to the static.

Well, people might draw genitals on cars where you live, you crrrazy hipster, but here they don't, I thought but didn't say.

I was a pressure cooker for the next hour. A cock on my car. Why? How? Mainly why? I decided to call Emma. She used to be a lawyer, after all. She, at least, would be a voice of reason in all of this. After three failed attempts she finally answered.

Em: I told you not to call me again.

Me: Hilarious. Listen, you're not going to believe this. Some little shit has scratched a cock on my car!

I didn't get the opportunity to finish the story, as there followed ten minutes of raucous laughter and mockery, some of which was extremely unkind. Emma was patently going to be useless, so I put the phone down on her, mid-roar, and called Nicola.

Nic: What's up? You split up with someone again?

Me: No. Not yet.

Nic: Oh. So what's up?

Me: Well, someone's scratched a cock on my car.

Nic: What – keyed it?

Me: Yes.

Nic: Wow. Shit. [Pause] That's a hate crime.

Me: Is it?

Nic: Yep.

Me: Really?

Nic: Yep. Classic.

Me: Classic?

Nic: Yeah.

Me: Yes. Yes, it is, isn't it? That's what I thought. It's a classic hate crime.

Nic: You shouldn't let them get away with it. Call the police. I would.

I think they have a unit for that sort of thing.

Me: Do they?

Nic: Expect so. That's abuse, plain and simple. It's homophobic abuse.

Nicola is an amazing actor and has played a lot of detectives in her time, so when she says something about law enforcement, I believe her. In the same way I'd believe Martin Shaw if he talked about open-heart surgery, or Robert Powell if he disclosed what really happened at the Last Supper.

Buoyed by our conversation, I put the phone down and immediately called the nearest police station, who duly transferred me to the relevant unit. Within five seconds of calling and explaining my situation, I could hear a wheezing noise that may or may not have been laughter in the background. In my mind I chose to rebrand it as an asthma attack.

To the credit of the local crime team, a mere hour later a young man in uniform appeared, clutching a Moleskine, the notebook of Hemingway and trainee coppers.

Policeman: So... what's happened?

Me: My car has been the victim of a homophobic attack.

Policeman: Your car?

Me: Yes.

Policeman: OK. Is your car gay?

Me: No! I mean... I don't know – I haven't asked.

Policeman: Right...

Me: What I mean is that I'm gay and I've been targeted. There's a cock keyed on the bonnet. Look!

I gesture in the vague direction of the bell-end. The copper moves to the front of the car to study it more closely.

Me: See it?

Him: Yes.

Me: See the cock?!

There is a long pause. What's he playing at? I think. Finally, he breaks the silence.

Him: The cock?

Me: Yes.

Him: Oh.

Me: What?

Him: Looks like a smiley face to me.

Everything goes very quiet. Silence except for the thumping of my pulse. I go around to join him.

Him: Look. See? Two eyes and a smile.

As he said it the image in front of me transformed. Suddenly the shallow shaft wasn't a shaft at all – it was two downward strokes representing eyes. The helmet – that expansive semicircle – wasn't a helmet but a broad, beaming grin. The vandal's scratches had gone from angry penis to Cheshire Cat in a heartbeat.

There was a long pause, finally punctuated by the policeman clearing his throat. I guess they learn that at Hendon – how to cut through awkward moments with a classic copper's cough.

Then horror dawned on me, the horror of what he must be thinking. Either it had been so long since I'd seen a cock that I no longer knew what one looked like (or at least couldn't distinguish between one and a smiley face) OR I am so obsessed with cocks that I see them everywhere, even on the bonnets of cars. I'm like that character in *The Sixth Sense* – I see penises. ALL THE TIME.

We wandered down the street towards his panda car. I tried to make small talk. It failed. It was then we noticed that all the other cars had been defaced. They too had smiley faces and scarred sides. I hadn't been singled out. I hadn't been targeted. There was no penis. There was no homophobic hate crime. In fact there was nothing but a lingering sense of humiliation that still makes itself felt every time I think back.

The Moleskine shut, the key turned in the panda's ignition and the policeman drove away. In a fit of humiliation and despair I scratched a pair of tits on my girlfriend's bike.

That's London for you.



# “My sexuality has never been in question”

If you want to find out about trans lesbians and sex, Google “transgender lesbians and sex” and you’re likely to come up empty-handed. What little does come up is mainly entries on forums from people asking about trans women and sexuality.

With the success of programmes such as *Transparent* and *Orange Is the New Black*, Laverne Cox and, more recently, Caitlyn Jenner’s very open and honest revelations about being transgender, trans women’s lives have never been so newsworthy.

Whilst we are a lot more understood than we ever have been, there are still many misconceptions about transgender women and sexuality. One of the main assumptions I have come across in my three and a bit years of transitioning is that I’m changing gender because I like men! Or that I’m bisexual but prefer men and therefore I will fit in more if I change gender.

Lesbians in their legions have faced similar problems when folks tell them they’re “men trapped in a woman’s body”. Folks who believe gender and sexuality are the same thing, like, doh! I mean, this is 2015, right?!

For me, my sexuality has never been in question. I love women, am sexually attracted to women. Always have been, and always will be. Sexuality and gender are totally separate and are as individual as people are. But for me, that’s what I am and that’s what I always will be.

I want to dispel a myth before I write any more and that myth is: not all transgender women intend on having gender reassignment surgery (GRS). GRS percentages in trans women are not well documented but some trans women are comfortable living in the role without hormone intervention. Some take hormones and opt not to

have surgery. As with every surgery, there are risks, including loss of feeling. Some women (and I fit into this category) choose to go down the hormonal and surgical route.

I shared the last part with you as it’s important that you understand my perspective on this subject. I’m pre-op transgender and therefore I am waiting to have surgery but have been on hormones for some time.

The changes to my body have been phenomenal. I’ve had breast development, my skin is so much softer, my hair growth has changed (softer and finer), I have hips (finally), my bottom is getting bigger, my thighs touch at the top, heck – I even have cellulite!

But more important – and this is the weird thing for me – is that my senses are so much heightened. Especially when aroused. I’ve finally come around to loving my body. I’m able to look into the mirror and see something that I’m proud to look at, more comfortable with. It’s not always been that way though. I’ve always had issues with body dysphoria. I’ve hated my body most of my life. Whilst I wouldn’t say that I am completely happy with how my body is currently, I’m happier with it than I ever have been.

It’s taken me a few experiences in my transition to have what readers would classify as lesbian sex.

I did have an experience with a girl early on in my transition. It was wonderful and special, but due to my development it felt a lot like it had in the past, pre-transition.

I then had another experience which didn’t go so well but this made me more determined to be in a relationship with someone that I clicked with on every level, and I’m lucky to have found that with the woman I am with now.

DEBBIE LOUISE  
CANNON  
WRITES  
ABOUT HOW  
SEX WITH  
WOMEN HAS  
CHANGED FOR  
HER SINCE HER  
TRANSITION

With her, the orgasms I’ve had have always been female ones.

It’s difficult to describe this. Especially to other women, or women who have never experienced a male orgasm. Essentially, with the male orgasm, there’s an explosion and then that’s it. You may have a wave of euphoria, then it’s an explosion and then it’s over. You may have a kiss and cuddle, but afterwards the male body flops and you’re done. This is my experience, anyway.

And then you have the female orgasm. But for me it’s not just that. It’s the whole thing. It’s the build-up. I find myself becoming electrified when my partner touches me. She can just look at me a certain way and I’m jelly.

I get the hot flushes, the nipples hardening, the deep panting, and the delicious tingling of my skin. She can touch me and I’m near climax.

At this point you may be wondering, as I’ve already revealed I’m pre-op, if I use “something” or not? I’m going to be honest and say yes, sometimes we do. But not that often, because we don’t need to. Penetration is not essential to the female orgasm and I know that I am preaching to the converted here, also, but I had to say that.

When my girlfriend is stimulating me (I did ask her permission before writing this), she will stimulate the perineum. So the area where my G-spot currently is. And this is where I feel lucky; after all it is about the same size as a walnut. Because of where it is, though, we have the benefit of being able to do the physical things other lesbian couples do in sex to stimulate each other very easily. And I have to say, the results are flipping mindblowing!

The difference between how I orgasm now and how I did previously is phenomenal. For one, the G-spot

I become electrified when my partner touches me. She can just look at me and I’m jelly



The sex is mindblowing for both of us, says trans lesbian Debbie Louise Cannon

shoots electrical pulses through my body like nothing I have ever experienced. Ever. I actually shudder, and because it's not coming from a place of stimulation of the other thing, it comes in waves and waves and waves of euphoria.

If I compared it to food? It's like comparing a burger to filet mignon. There is no comparison. This is my experience of it, anyway. And speaking to my partner as well as other female friends about the female orgasm: they agree with me.

So to all lesbians out there who think that sex with a transgender lesbian is not like having sex with a woman, will you change your mind, having read this article? Maybe.

At the very least, I hope that this will have stirred up your curiosity on the subject.

I think the most important lesson I have learned in all of this is that some people are compatible, and some aren't. That's life.

But in cutting out a percentage of the lesbian population, due to the fact that they used to be someone else, or because they pretended to be something they weren't for a period in their lives – and let's face it, most of us have – you could be missing out on the best sex you've ever had. As my girlfriend says, she has never had a partner like me. She tells me that sex has never been as wonderful as it feels with me.

And to any transgender lesbians reading this, those who have been rejected by women for being transgender, or who think that no lesbian will ever accept them, because of their past, I say: keep going.

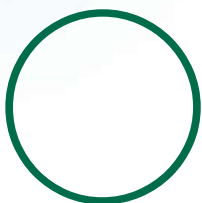
There is someone out there for everyone. I am living testament to that. If you love and trust someone, and they love you? Surely the rest is irrelevant. **D**



# CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE

# THIRD

# KIND



ne of the speediest films to sell out at this year's BFI Flare festival was entitled

Portrait Of A Serial Monogamist. Programmer Emma Smart and I joked about how it represented an uncomfortably familiar lesbian archetype. For behind the romantic-comedy fiction is a stark truth. It might be fun if, like the film's protagonist Elsie, you're the one doing the leaving. But if you're the one left scratching your head and wondering what the hell just happened, then not so much.

This reality has played out on my Facebook news feed. Every joyous anniversary is offset by a break-up. In late 2013, the Office For National Statistics released figures showing civil partnership dissolution rates that were twice as high for female couples as for males. It's not just the frequency of separations that has shocked me. The sheer emotional violence and one-sided nature of many of them has forced me out of my own monogamous comfort zone to seek refuge in the more conscious, compassionate values of polyamory.

**ROSIE WILBY  
WONDERS  
IF HAVING  
MORE THAN  
ONE INTIMATE  
RELATIONSHIP  
COULD BE  
THE WAY TO  
SUSTAIN MORE,  
BETTER  
RELATIONSHIPS  
OVER TIME**

This doesn't mean that I'm engaged in some kind of round-the-clock hedonistic orgy. Yet my primary partner and I have found a framework and language that encourages us to celebrate our deep, platonic connection rather than carelessly discard it. Certainly the poly community we've got to know tend to define it in a literal sense as "many loves", taking the emphasis away from sex.

When I met my girlfriend five years ago, it rapidly became apparent that we had discovered a precious and permanent bond but not a particularly sexual or romantic one. We tried to fit in with our monogamous, middle-class peer group. We tried to present as a "couple". Yet neither of us is asexual, so clearly we couldn't be exclusive within an already non-sexual relationship. Everyone told us to break up. Yet, to me, that seemed dismissive of the wonderful grey areas in between love, sex and friendship. In this case, grey seems completely the wrong colour. It is supposedly a colour of neutrality, detachment and compromise. Yet I began to wonder if a world beyond the oppressive binary of relationships being either sexual or not might be the richer and more vibrant one after all.

There was no single word to de-

scribe our mutual love, trust, respect, honesty, laughter, kindness and sharing. We couldn't say "friends" because people always put the word "just" in front of it, as if it's somehow lesser, its currency diminished. Thanks to social media, the concept of "friends" has been co-opted and sold back to us, diluted and airbrushed. When I listed the qualities above to someone I hoped would become a close ally, she was non-plussed and said, "I don't do friendships like that." Perhaps enduring friendships only have a chance in this time-starved modern era if they start out as a relationship of sorts, rendering monogamy impossible if you want to have more than one. An ex of mine uses the term "love affair friendships" to differentiate her deeper, lasting connections.

What I'm really seeking to do is to find a contemporary way of emulating previous generations of dykes, albeit with slightly new language. Out of necessity, due to small networks and rejection by biological relatives, they cultivated a concept of "friends as family". It's an old queer idea that we are in desperate danger of losing now that we are embracing nuclear family structures.

I spoke to Dr Jane Traies, who recently conducted the first ever

comprehensive survey of older lesbians in the UK, collecting anecdotes and data from 400 women in their 60s and beyond. "It's not uncommon," she says, "for a lesbian's ex-partner to be her best friend." Often the ex becomes close to the new partner too. Traies described one couple, now in their 70s, one of whom was previously in a straight marriage and the other who had always been gay and had many more exes, of which four or five were significant. They would regularly visit them, house-sit and cat-sit for them. Interestingly, this sense of creating and sharing a close network chimes with important facets of ethical polyamory. The central relationship seems to positively benefit from being surrounded by other human connections and sources of love and comfort, alleviating the burden asked of one sole partner.

One woman even said that "the best way to make a really good friend was to have a brief relationship", as if the sexual intimacy, while short-lived, had cemented a deeper bond to take forwards. Yet older gay women seem to have preferred to use the language of breaking up and then "remaining friends" rather than seeing these as concurrent relationships. Long before Chris and Gwyneth, perhaps they were negotiating a more conscious way of separating than my traumatised Facebook friends.

The real question here is why female-female relationships might end more frequently than others. If we can understand any science underpinning the behaviour then perhaps we can empower ourselves to overthrow the serial monogamy stereotype or communicate more openly about new relationship models that are designed for women and not men. Further ONS figures show that, within heterosexual relationships, women are twice as likely to initiate a divorce.

More food for thought comes in New York Times journalist Daniel Bergner's 2013 book *What Do Women Want?* He gathers evidence of a kind of existential despair felt by women in long-term monogamous relationships. He suggests that the craving for sexual and romantic novelty is much more vast and profound in women than in men, something that we have not previously admitted or explored. In her book *Va-*

*gina*, Naomi Wolf even suggested that, for a woman, having sex with someone who has come to feel like the "wrong" partner can erode her very sense of self. The most recent NATSAL (National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles) findings reported that women were twice as likely as men to say that a lack of interest in sex had been an issue within the last year. No wonder, then, that lesbian couples are doubly hit by these challenges.

Interestingly, a new female "Viagra" turns out to work like an anti-depressant. A recent TV news item about it included a clip of a woman saying she "just wanted to desire her husband again". Tellingly, she didn't say she wanted to "feel desire again" per se. Perhaps the real challenge was in desiring the person she was married to. Experiments in labs on female rats have shown them rapidly go off sex with a familiar partner but utterly re-energised by a new one. Whereas divorced heterosexual male friends tell me they were still in love with their wives and would happily have been faithful, loving and constant. Yet they were kept at arm's length for years before being dumped.

So not only are women more likely to go off a partner, they also seem to prefer to leave a relationship altogether rather than look outside of it for fulfilment of unmet needs as a strategy for staying put. While this may be a noble intention it is arguably more disruptive to the ecology of our wider friendship networks. Whole groups of companions are forced to disband or take sides.

Many gay men successfully negotiate an open relationship and stay emotionally faithful to one partner, hence their lower "divorce" rates. Studies in the 1980s suggested that about 53% of gay male couples and just 4% of lesbian couples had consensual non-monogamy agreements in their current relationship. Dr Qazi Rahman, senior lecturer at the Institute Of Psychiatry, King's College London, explains that women tend to have a lower socio-sexual orientation – a willingness to engage in sexual activity outside a committed relationship. "But", he says, "some of that sex difference is affected by social factors like gender equality and economic development."

So, if women do want to have sex with a partner but are not finding it possible either inside or outside their longer-term relationships, the only solution in a monogamous society is to break up. But perhaps what women seek is more complex than a quick erotic fix in the sauna. A review of TV documentary *The Secret Life Of Tinder* asserted that it was an "anthropological film about addiction – to romance for the women, to sex for the men". If it is indeed romance that women seek, then can we find this via openly-declared "love affair friendships" running alongside our committed primary partnerships as a way of breaking free from the serial monogamy rollercoaster?

These LAF relationships tend to be non-sexual. My ex deliberately has hers with heterosexual women in order to set a clear boundary. Early last year I embarked upon a wonderful new connection akin to the sort of intense bonds I had at school. Not since teenage-hood had I walked down the street holding hands with a best buddy, staying up late talking and sharing private jokes and favourite songs. The most magic part? It enhanced my primary relationship. It was as if having the space to express positive feelings of love and have them received, understood and reciprocated released me. My partner and I had connected sex, probably for the first time ever.

Yet acting with awareness for others' needs doesn't come without its costs. I actively encouraged my single LAF to find a partner and, once she had, our boundaries had to be redrawn. Sadly, my own primary partner and I also withdrew back to a platonic square one.

I started this journey seeking to validate women's desire for sex and romance when their primary relationship no longer delivers that – and to seek a happier and less disruptive solution than a break-up. To date, however, what I and my partner have actually done is to create other intense and largely platonic friendships which have fed positive energy back into our own connection – not quite as sexy an outcome as I'd anticipated. But one that leaves me with hope that behaving with more compassion and less self-interest is the route forwards to true intimacy. **D**

Thanks to social media, the concept of "friends" has been co-opted and sold back to us, diluted and airbrushed





# Revenge Porn

In September Paige Mitchell, a lesbian from Stevenage, became the first woman to be found guilty of putting explicit images of her ex on Facebook. This crime, codified in new “revenge porn” legislation, resulted in a suspended six-week sentence, with Mitchell narrowly avoiding a jail sentence following her guilty plea.

Revenge porn carries a hefty two-year sentence if it can be proved that the sharing of private, explicit/sexual materials, either photos or videos of another person, without their consent and with the purpose of causing embarrassment or distress, has taken place. The sharing of such images became illegal in April of this year in response to a rise in the number of incidents reported to the police.

The overwhelming majority of people using revenge porn (RP) to lash out at their exes are men, and the victims are mostly women under 30, although pensioners and middle-aged women have also been victims. It’s too early to get official statistics about RP that records both the victims’ and assailants’ sexuality, amongst other things, but organisations like Women’s Aid report an increase in this kind of abuse, which they see as an extension of the controlling types of behaviour linked to other types of gender-based abuse and violence. Websites enabling

SINCE REVENGE PORN BECAME A CRIME, LBT PEOPLE HAVE FOUND THEMSELVES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE LAW

WORDS ALENA DIERICKX

Many of us share quite explicit pictures of ourselves with those we are intimate with and think we can trust

RP are reported to make up to £30,000 a month from hate-fuelled exes. That’s a lot of income from trading on humiliation.

Paige Mitchell, 24, had a fight with her girlfriend, Rebecca Brinkley, who was upset that Mitchell had been eyeing up other women. During this fight, Mitchell hit Brinkley and uploaded intimate pictures of her on Facebook. Although Facebook is not a revenge porn site, everyone the couple knew could see the images. Mitchell was told by her mum to remove the photos because she knew that what her daughter had done was illegal. They were up for 30 minutes before Mitchell removed them, but by then the damage was done and Brinkley’s humiliation and embarrassment were irreversible.

In Wales, trans man Jesse Hawthorne, 24, is awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to uploading sexually-explicit pictures of his former girlfriend to Facebook. He had wanted to get his pet dog Charlie back after the couple ended their relationship when he decided to transition. After a night drinking with his friends, Hawthorne entered his ex’s home around 3am while a party was going on, in the hope that he could get Charlie. After a fight he left without the dog and was charged by police, but later cleared, on several counts of criminal damage.

I have to admit that I was surprised when researching this article to learn just how big a problem RP is. It’s common for many of us to share quite explicit pictures of ourselves with those we are intimate with and think we can trust. Jill Filipovic, a blogger for Feministe and journalist with Cosmo and the Guardian, writes: “Once you’ve been face to genitals with someone, sending them a nude picture doesn’t seem like it should be such a big deal.”

As a counsellor, I’ve worked with young people who are often duped into sending ill-advised images of themselves, only later to regret it. This could be explained by the fact that generally speaking, the younger you are, the greater the need for mobile technology to be connected to others and as an extension of the self.

But there’s a lot of hatred in RP, and it is proof of the continuing virulence of misogyny. It’s also an easy, often anonymous way to attack people and get support for trolling. In fact, though RP is now illegal, it isn’t illegal to run a revenge porn website or look at the pictures and add to a stream of nasty comments. It’s a web version of being ridiculed and attacked on the street. It ruins lives. What is so bad that anyone would deserve such public humiliation?

Recently the TV presenter Anna Richardson was involved in an investigative programme for Channel 4, in





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which she bravely used pictures of her body as online bait to see what all the “fuss” was about. Her bogus post got over 100,000 hits and a lot of nasty, abusive comments.

The men that Richardson spoke to in her TV programme seemed to think that the blame lay with their exes who shouldn't have sent images they didn't want to be made public. Clearly, leaving an untrustworthy creep, who thinks you belong to him, is the unforgivable crime in question.

Paige Mitchell and Jesse Hawthorne seem to have been willing to cause harm and humiliation without much provocation, especially when you consider the consequences of RP, and this is a pattern of behaviour that is abusive and controlling and rarely happens as a one-off.

In 2010, some unsettling data came out of a study by the CDC in the US, which suggests that intimate partner violence (IPV) is very much a lesbian/bi issue. Almost 44% of lesbians and 61.1% of bisexual women (we don't know the gender breakdown of their partners) had experienced IPV. This compares to 26% of gay men, 35% of heterosexual women, 29% of heterosexual men and 37.3% of bi men (again, we don't know the gender breakdown of their partners).

As revenge porn only became illegal this year, we may not get much in the way of statistics for a while but it would seem likely to follow a similar pattern to domestic violence. LGBT domestic abuse charity Broken Rainbow states on its website: “At the root of abusive behaviours is a disregard for boundaries and a lack of respect for a person's autonomy.”

This confusion about boundaries is something that I have seen as a constant theme with young people who lack experience in relationships. It

becomes less excusable with increasing age. Mitchell and Hawthorne are in their 20s and I think impulsivity and the immediacy of online technologies is an explosive mix for the young. I often think about the stupid things I would have said on Facebook if it was around when I was drunk and inexperienced. But once you put something online for all to see, you can't undo it.

There seems to be something about the mixture of how easy it is to do harm online, without any necessary consequences if you remain anonymous, and the melting pot of all our most horrible, unspoken instincts to hit out when we feel hurt. I often feel quite differently about everything the morning after I've been feeling angry and decided not to instantly react, but sit with it a while or talk it over with a friend.

The YouTube couple Chrissy Chambers and her partner Bria Kam, based in the US, who between them have over half a million subscribers, have seen some serious damage done to their business because of Chrissy's ex-boyfriend's foray into RP. Chambers is trying to pursue a criminal prosecution here in the UK against her British ex and obtain a civil action for damages at the same time. If she's successful she will make legal history.


After suggesting they take a break from each other, Chambers agreed to have one last drinking session with her ex, during which he filmed them having sex. Chambers says she doesn't remember the sex and had no knowledge of the recording being made. This is considered rape under British law because Chambers was drunk and if you are drunk you cannot give consent. He then uploaded the film to an amateur porn site, which Chambers knew nothing about for over a year until disappointed fans

started to tell her how she was no longer an inspiration to them, but just another “slut”. In fact, the film has been shared on 35 separate porn sites in two years. Unfortunately, because this happened before the new law was introduced, the previous Acts used in such cases will need to suffice for a criminal conviction. These are the Malicious Communications Act and the Protection from Harassment Act.

Revenge porn websites have tried to argue that sites like theirs could be seen as preventing violence by allowing a space to vent rage. But this isn't harm-free stuff. Mainly women are losing jobs and income and reputations because of this kind of abuse. It is interesting that press interest focuses on lesbians and transgendered people, reinforcing stereotypes about “deviant” marginalised individuals. Similar things happen in the context of public urination. Men do it with impunity but it's the women who are caught who often become the focus of a salacious mainstream media story.

In fact, the sad statistics for this year show that of 149 allegations concerning RP, only six led to a caution or charge and we know that Paige Mitchell is one of them and Jesse Hawthorne is another. The rest are heterosexual men, some of whom got custodial sentences.

Revenge porn is being taken seriously by the UK government, which has set up a new dedicated helpline (0845 6000 459) that offers advice and practical help, and has also funded the hate crime charity Galop's website [stoponlineabuse.org.uk](http://stoponlineabuse.org.uk).

How the crime statistics will pan out going forward is anyone's guess but I wonder how reporting will change and how much our LBT communities will be affected as a result of the new legislation. 

**Revenge porn isn't harm-free. Women are losing jobs, income and reputations because of this kind of abuse**



# Why do straight women watch lesbian porn?

**S**ome say there is no time or place that we're more honest with ourselves than when we have our hands down our pants. Certainly, many psychotherapists believe what we're aroused by reveals secrets long since locked away in the darkest crevices of our minds.

"Porn is a window into the deepest levels of your psyche," says Stanley Siegel, a psychotherapist from New York. "Specific erotic images are connections to deeper inner truths long banished from consciousness. What arouses us is far from random or meaningless. The porn we choose to watch is indicated by our psychological histories. From it, you can discover your deepest desires, where they come from, and what they mean."

So does the news that 50% of lesbian porn subscribers are straight women, and data from Pornhub showing them 132% more likely to search for girl on girl than men, mean they're all secretly queer?

Well, no. It's a little more complicated than that. London-based therapist Tania Glyde, "What causes us to be aroused by a particular image is more complex than simply whether it represents a hotline to a past experience. Women, queer or straight, are used to having our agency taken from us, and being told what we are supposed to like, from our youngest age. For

EVIDENCE SUGGESTS STRAIGHT WOMEN ARE WATCHING MORE LESBIAN PORN THAN ANYONE ELSE. BUT WHAT DOES THAT TELL US ABOUT SEXUALITY?

WORDS CARRIE LYLELL

example, there are many people who still believe that if there isn't a penis in the room, it isn't possible for sex to have happened. But the patriarchal/cis-normative/white predominance in porn excludes a large number of people and the penis-in-vagina paradigm simply doesn't work for quite a lot of us as a primary source of arousal."

"Sure, maybe we are drawn to some aspects and details that give away our inner truths," says porn producer Erika Lust. "But it doesn't take Freud to figure that out." The award-winning filmmaker, who has pioneered feminist, ethical porn, thinks the reason straight women watch lesbian porn may lie in internet porn, a lot of which is free and easy to access. "The porn we've been brought up to watch and to be turned on by is just that – something we have learnt to let arouse us, and I don't think we can let it reflect our psychological histories too much."

Many people agree. "I think it has more to do with the fact that mainstream heterosexual porn is extremely limited and so male-orientated," says Béatrice Châteauvert-Gagnon, a PhD student who works closely with the Centre for Sexual Dissidence at the University of Sussex. She believes that the popularity of mainstream lesbian porn is more a reaction to straight porn than a sign of greater sexual fluidity.

"It targets a male public, is produced by them and [reproduces] fantasies they think most men want to watch," she says. "Which means that, in the end, about 95% of straight porn usually follows the same structure and pictures the same acts, which very often involve the domination and humiliation of women through forced fellatio, face cumshot, raw anal and so on. Stuff that used to be under the

label BDSM is now portrayed as the go-to in almost all porn movies. So I think a lot of women might not enjoy watching this. Or, at least, there is not a lot of possibility for constructing desire and fantasies."

So the popularity of lesbian porn amongst straight women is a reaction to heterosexual porn, rather than an example of fluidity in female sexuality? "I think it's both," says Lust. "I've heard women say they watch lesbian porn because a lot of mainstream porn terrifies them. But also women are socialised to appreciate both the male and female form, whereas men are often made to feel 'gay' if they even look at another guy. I think people would enjoy themselves a lot more if they could free themselves from these restricting ideas."

That makes sense, and there is plenty of anecdotal evidence to back up the line of thinking that straight women watch lesbian porn because heterosexual porn can be degrading and humiliating to women. But as well as being put off by the kinds of acts on screen, many viewers simply don't find it true to life. "I find heterosexual porn so unrealistic," says Layla Andrews (not her real name), a straight woman who likes watching lesbian porn. "A woman being pounded by a huge penis just isn't at all appealing to me, it just looks really painful and unpleasant. I don't think I've ever seen an example of heterosexual porn in which I was convinced that the female isn't faking her screaming orgasm."

But it doesn't really explain the popularity of lesbian porn, a lot of which is also formulaic, unrealistic and made for a male audience. Andrews herself says she uses mainstream websites like RedTube to find girl on

## A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO FEMINIST PORN

[xconfessions.com](http://xconfessions.com)  
[crashpadseries.com](http://crashpadseries.com)  
[bleuproductions.com](http://bleuproductions.com)  
[queerporn.tv](http://queerporn.tv)  
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[tristantaormino.com](http://tristantaormino.com)  
[ovidie.net](http://ovidie.net)  
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girl porn, which many lesbian and bisexual women say they don't watch, preferring to search for real lesbian porn made by feminist porn producers, or to watch hetero and gay male porn. So why is the mainstream lesbian stuff still so popular? "While we can't prove conclusively why, it likely reflects an important reality about female sexuality," says Amanda Chatel. In an article for Mic.com, she says that women, regardless of sexuality, need more than is on offer from mainstream heterosexual porn. "Most women want authentic, non-degrading, pleasurable sex – and they need more than penetration to get off. Whether you're gay, straight or bi, female viewers are clearly drawn to women being intimate with other women," she says.

Châteauvert-Gagnon thinks it's also about leaving distance between ourselves and what we watch, allowing space for fantasy and the construction of our own desires, which can also explain the popularity of gay male porn amongst some queer women. "It allows them to be voyeurs, a position that is rarely available or encouraged for women," she says. "Women tend to be socialised to always be the object of desire. I think what's arousing for lesbians in gay porn is being the outsider, the voyeur, that is not involved at all but can watch and get off over others' pleasure. Maybe there's a little bit of that for straight women watching lesbian porn as well. If it's far from your own sexuality, it might be easier to fantasise and believe in it."

Andrews, who also enjoys porn made for women by women, says she finds it "much sexier" than watching heterosexual porn. But she dismisses the idea that watching lesbian porn might be indicative of her true desires. "I don't think it's about fluidity of sexuality, certainly not my own sexuality, as I've only ever been attracted to men and can't imagine myself ever sleeping with another woman," she says.

Journalist Ginger Murray also rubbishes the idea that what we like to get off to reflects our real identities. In an article for Exhibitionist, she writes: "What arouses us defies gender roles,

political alliances and moral codes. What we do in our physical life may be tame or consciously aligned with these concerns. But our erotic imaginations are free to explore all manner of titillations – be they queer, straight, violent, silly or genuinely strange."

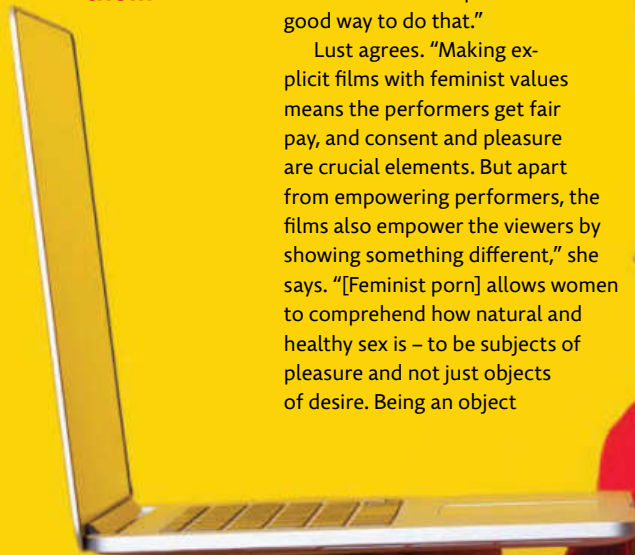
Certainly, as people are complex and contradictory, so are our tastes in porn. And Châteauvert-Gagnon thinks rather than getting hung up on what people are watching, we should be encouraging women, straight or queer, to own their desires without feeling guilt or shame about it. After all, many women struggle to even admit they watch porn, let alone discuss their likes and dislikes. "It's a socio-political issue. Society puts so much pressure on women through the century-old mommy/whore dichotomy that it's not surprising women end up feeling insecure and uncomfortable about their desires and sexuality," she says. "I believe women can and should re-appropriate their sexuality. We've become so good at complaining about everything we don't like but when it comes to what we do like it's much harder. We have to start decolonising our imaginations and explore our desires for ourselves. Feminist porn is a good way to do that."

Lust agrees. "Making explicit films with feminist values means the performers get fair pay, and consent and pleasure are crucial elements. But apart from empowering performers, the films also empower the viewers by showing something different," she says. "[Feminist porn] allows women to comprehend how natural and healthy sex is – to be subjects of pleasure and not just objects of desire. Being an object

of desire can be fun and erotic, but it's certainly not what we want all the time. Female bodies are capable of immense pleasure and intense orgasms. Maybe this scares some pornographers, and it's something that has been left out of the explicit film genre for too long. We have the right to feel pleasure, to enjoy sex and show how we like to receive desire."

But where to start? "Start by exploring what it is that arouses us," says Châteauvert-Gagnon. "Forget what is 'supposed' to arouse us." For Lust, that's about education. "We need more open discussions about porn, its influence, history and of course, we need more alternatives to the porn norm," she says. "Ethical porn costs more money to make and can't be as easily put up for free online. But I hope to see the alternative erotica genre grow and become more easily available to all." **D**

**"I've heard women say they watch lesbian porn because a lot of mainstream porn terrifies them"**







# "I just want some sex!"

**T**he world is ageing. The government estimates that by 2020 there will be 12% (or 1.1 million) more over-65s and 18% (300,000) more over-85s in the UK. Yet despite this increase, there remains a cultural aversion to seeing older people as sexual and the older people get, the less sexually visible they are, particularly women. Stonewall estimates that around 5-7% of the British population identifies as gay, lesbian or bisexual, although the

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WHETHER  
THE SAME IS  
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SEXUAL DESIRE**

true figure is difficult to determine. The one thing we know for sure is that we are all getting older and how we think about and experience sex changes over our lifespan.

According to a survey in the US magazine *Allure*, LGBT people are more likely to have relationships with a big age gap. Ellen DeGeneres, 57, and Portia de Rossi, 42, are an obvious age-gap couple but there are many more, such as the model Jenny Shimizu, 48, and fashion icon, Michelle Harper, 37, and author Jeanette Winterson, 56,

and psychoanalyst and author Susie Orbach, 68.

Academic Jane Traies has researched the lives and experiences of lesbians over 60 in the UK. On the matter of sex and sexuality she found in her data that 75.8% of older lesbians said that sexual needs were still very important in their lives, whether they had a relationship or not. One respondent, Kathryn, describing a happy but no longer sexual partnership, reflected: "I don't want to leave my life partner, I just want some sex; unlike



men and the straight scene, there are no cruising grounds for women."

This and other accounts disrupt the notion of the "sexless older woman," argues Traies, as even lesbians who are not in long-term relationships – around 11% of her respondents – were still having new sexual partners into their 60s and 70s. One in 10 describe having sex weekly or more; and every now and then someone like Traies' interviewee Joan will fall in love at 76.

A lack of interest in sex has been pathologised as a dysfunction and we

women have now earned our very own "pink Viagra" called Flibanserin. The drug treats hypoactive sexual desire disorder (HSDD) or female sexual dysfunction (FSD). This suggests that female desire (or lack of it) is always a problem that needs an intervention, and seems to me to misunderstand the sexual diversity of women and the constantly changing states of the female body. In Traies' research she makes reference to the feminist Marilyn Frye, who takes issue with questions like, "How many times do you have sex?". She demands: "'Times?' What will we count? What's to count?"

Traies notes the diversity of women's sexuality and all the emotional intensity, something she describes as "women's erotic plasticity", that isn't solely genital. Female sexuality is not adequately described, she says; too often it is medicalised and therefore difficult to research.

Having talked to people myself about their own sexual experiences as older lesbians, this diversity is very much present. Elise, now 49, remembers her most passionate lover being an older woman of 60, whom she met when she was 40.

"I instantly felt so attracted by this woman's energy and sex appeal, I actually thought she was about 48 or so and I got really obsessed with meeting her and asking her on a date. After various emails she agreed to meet up and explained her surprise at being pursued. A passionate relationship quickly developed, she was so hot and had so much sexual drive, way more than I thought I could handle. I learned so much about sex from her, from just being with her. It's difficult to describe and it isn't about sex acts. Her age and life experiences seemed to all gather into this intense sexuality. I've been really picky with partners after Gayle."

But there's something about this plasticity that can even turn a straight woman into considering a female rather than a male lover. The feminist

philosopher Simone de Beauvoir wrote a lot about ageing, an experience that found her in a kind of persistent mourning for the loss of youthfulness; having always remained a loyal partner to Jean-Paul Sartre, with his constant stream of young lovers, she felt the sting of getting old and becoming less desirable. But her happy moments were about finding a younger female lover and discovering a new, exciting side to life. In her recent book about ageing, *Out Of Time*, author and academic Lynne Segal also describes love with a woman after a lifetime of heterosexual partnerships. Could bisexual ageing be a more hopeful prospect in a man's world?

The benefits of ageing can allow transformations never considered before. Andrea, another of Traies' respondents, thinks about how meeting new people and thinking of yourself anew can be tricky when partners know so much about you that they tell others what you do and don't like, but the desire to try new things is, nevertheless, enticing: "Maybe you want to be a new person in your own life, and your current life is stopping you."

Many older lesbians and bi women have continued to create and recreate themselves in their life, art and work. Feminist authors Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich and Alice Walker demonstrate a feisty energy and a strength of voice that seems to come with increasing years. It's a paradox that you can feel new in old skin but desire is present for most of us, no matter how old we are. A friend of mine recently told me, that at 70, she wanted everything even more than in her youth, sex, love, excitement and adventure, nothing conventional or too safe, she liked that feeling of everything being a little insecure and dangerous because it made her feel really alive. I thought of a quote by Virginia Woolf that sums up a lot of what I think about ageing: "I don't believe in ageing. I believe in forever altering one's aspect to the sun." ●

**"Her age and life experience seemed to all gather into this intense sexuality"**



# LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX...

It's been 30 years since the launch of LGBT+ mental health charity PACE and much has changed for women who have relationships with women. As well as groundbreaking legislation, we've seen lesbian, bi and trans celebrities burst out of the closet and onto our screens. But we're not all as confident about our sexuality and identity as this new visibility might imply and behind the scenes, PACE continues to do important work helping LGBTQI women to heal and thrive. Here, PACE counselling manager Sona Barbosa and domestic violence counsellor Olivia Cunningham answer questions for DIVA readers.

## I AM A SURVIVOR OF SEXUAL ABUSE. WILL I EVER BE ABLE TO ENJOY SEX?

Yes; it is absolutely possible for survivors of sexual abuse to be able to enjoy a fulfilling and satisfying sex life. Survivors can experience a wide range of complex and painful feelings because our automatic, biological bodily response during the abuse may have been feelings of pleasure, excitement or even orgasm. This can cause confusion and creates deep feelings such as shame, guilt and blame, which can affect a person's self-esteem and can lead to ambivalent feelings about sex. Feelings of shame around what you've suffered can be overwhelming and prevent you from speaking about your experiences. Breaking the silence about your experience of sexual abuse and finding a way to speak about the impact this has had on you is essential. Talking with a trained, professional counsellor or psychotherapist has the potential over time to help you to understand what happened and alleviate any feelings of shame, anger, guilt and/or self-blame. Working through the myriad of painful feelings with a counsellor will reclaim your own sense of self and sexuality.

## I AM DATING A LOT BUT CAN'T SEEM TO MAKE A RELATIONSHIP STICK. WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?

Absolutely nothing. What might be helpful is to look at how you relate to yourself. It sounds like you're judging yourself by assuming that because you can't make a relationship stick there must be something wrong with you. What does it mean to you to not be in a relationship and how do you manage your feelings about this?

Becoming aware of how you speak to yourself in a negative, judgemental way and learning how to change that behaviour can help prevent you from eroding your self-confidence and self-esteem. Be curious about how you speak to yourself in your head; do you believe that you are enough for someone, and if not, why? Spend time getting to know and love yourself; discovering what you need and want emotionally and having the kindness and compassion to look after your own emotional needs first will help you to identify what you want in a partner and from a relationship. When we can identify our own needs and wants and relate to ourselves in a positive, compassionate way, we become happier.

## DOES IT MATTER IF MY GIRLFRIEND AND I AREN'T HAVING SEX?

The only way to find out is to have a conversation about it. First, have a conversation with yourself. Ask yourself if it matters to you that you are not having sex? What does the absence of sex mean to you and how does it affect your relationship? Secondly, whatever the answer is, talk about this with your girlfriend. Knowing what you want and need in a relationship is important. Our sexual appetites can be as varied and diverse as we are as individuals. You or your girlfriend may identify as asexual and may not have, want or feel the need for sex. This may not be a problem for either of you or it may cause tension; this is something that you need to discuss to see if it's possible to reach a compromise, and if not, then what?

If sex is something that you've both enjoyed in the past and you miss it then it would be good to explore with your girlfriend the reasons why you're no longer having sex. These reasons could be varied and until you can find a way to identify the reason for the lack of sex then it's difficult to find a solution. Talking about it openly and honestly can help you can both to find ways of addressing the issue.

## JOIN THE CONVERSATION AT LGBT+ WOMEN TALK SEX - A FREE EVENT

Join Margaret Unwin of PACE, DIVA editor Jane Czynszelska and panel guests at a free LGBT+ women's health event focused on sex and relationships, in celebration of the 30th anniversary of LGBT+ mental health charity PACE.

19 November, 6-9pm (doors open 5.30pm)  
The Lift, 45 White Lion St, London N1 9PW  
Book your free place at [pacehealth.org.uk](http://pacehealth.org.uk)



## HOW CAN I TELL IF I'M IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour and/or violence or abuse between you and intimate partners, exes or family members can be a sign that you are in an abusive relationship. Abuse has many forms; including one or more of the following:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

If you feel afraid of your partner most of the time this is a good indicator that the relationship is abusive. Physical violence can be visible through cuts, bruises and broken bones. Emotionally controlling, coercive and threatening behaviour can vary and may be subtle, such as belittling, humiliating, criticising or insulting you regularly and/or in front of other people. Forcing you to have sex or participate in sexual activities that you are uncomfortable with is abusive.

Other examples include preventing you from seeing your family and friends or being upset with you when you do. Threatening to disclose your sexuality to family, friends or work colleagues is a form of psychological and emotional abuse.

Controlling your decisions about how you spend your money and/or checking your texts and emails to see who you've been communicating with are examples of psychological, financial and emotional abuse.

## I AM BI AND MY GIRLFRIEND DOESN'T TRUST ME: WHAT CAN I SAY TO HER?

This is an uncomfortable situation for you both: for your girlfriend because she feels nervous and insecure and jealous. And for you, because you feel defensive and confused and hurt because you're being punished pre-emptively for something you haven't done. It's hard to be in a relationship where you feel like you can't trust the other person's love. That doesn't mean that she's not allowed to have insecurities; we all do. It doesn't even mean that there isn't a healthy way to talk about those feelings.

For couples and individuals to deal with jealousy and trust issues it takes communication, self-knowledge, respect and work. Talk to your girlfriend; find out why she's feeling this way. Are her issues coming from your actual relationship or from her past experiences? Sometimes people bring baggage into relationships that take a little extra time to deal with, and if this is the case and it is her personal baggage from some other relationship, then talk about that. Her worry may also be that "she's not enough for you". Find out where that's coming from, and explore this with her. Reassure her of your feelings and of your commitment to your relationship. Honest communication will help you build a genuine and trusting relationship.

## IS CASUAL SEX A BAD THING?

Casual sex is often presented as damaging. However, engaging in (safe) casual sex could be a good path to discovering important things about your sexuality, and help you learn about your emotional self, be more confident sexually when in a committed relationship, work through your inhibitions, etc.

Are you having casual sex because you want to have some fun? Do you want to explore and learn about your sexuality? Do you believe it is an important experience to have? Are you being safe? Do you respect the other person enough to be honest about what you want? If that's the case, there's no reason why you should not engage in casual sex.

On the other hand, are you having casual sex because you believe it'll make you feel better about yourself? Because by engaging in casual sex you'll avoid other unpleasant feelings? You want to please someone? You hope it'll lead to a long-term relationship? Are you under the influence of drugs/alcohol? If you relate to any of these, you might want to explore why this is.

Engaging in casual sex is a choice. Why you engage in casual sex is also important. Motivation and expectations are powerful things and will affect your wellbeing when it comes to casual sex and how you may feel about it.

## I AM A TRANS WOMAN: WILL LESBIANS OR BI WOMEN WANT TO DATE ME?

Lesbians and bi women are as diverse and unique as straight women in terms of who they're interested in, so I guess the honest answer is that it depends. That said, there's a lot in play here and all kinds of inner feelings and beliefs that affect the answer.

Some lesbians and bi women are not fully secure in their identity as lesbian or bi, so that forming a relationship with a transgender woman raises serious identity threat or may damage their "cred". Some have a mindset rooted in essentialism that holds that trans women are really men and can't ever really be women. Some lesbians or bi women (not that many) would never date one and would ostracise (or worse) any lesbian who did. Some lesbians or bi women (also some straight women) fetishize trans women, thinking "best of both worlds", or "this will be exotic".

So my answer is that if a lesbian or bi woman is mature, secure in her identity, and generally broad-minded, there's a good chance she'd be open to dating a trans woman that she finds attractive. If she's immature, insecure, afraid of having her lesbian-ness questioned, vulnerable to social aggression, then probably not.

It may be important to ask yourself if you're stuck on specifically dating a lesbian or bi woman or if you feel in some way that the lesbian community is where you belong, or if you would be open to dating people with other kinds of identities.





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More information on p7  
[divadigital.co.uk](http://divadigital.co.uk)

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# sex and the country









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BLACK AND GREY  
CHECKED SHIRT BY  
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BRA BY NIKOH £190,  
BLACK AND GREY  
CHECKED SHIRT  
BY RAILS £125



BLACK NEOPRENE  
BRA BY **NIKOH** £190,  
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SHAWL BY **VIVIENNE**  
**WESTWOOD** £210



# 3 of the best queer sex clubs

SEX CLUBS ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE POPULAR WITH LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND QUEER WOMEN, BUT THEY CAN BE INTIMIDATING FOR A BEGINNER. DIVA PICKS THREE OF LONDON'S FRIENDLIEST TO GET YOU STARTED

## Klub Fukk

Klub Fukk first began in 2004 and 11 years later is one of the most established and well-loved queer play parties in the UK. Run by the Wotever World crew, KF began as a response to straight, heteronormative fetish parties and has gone from strength to strength since. "A lot has happened over the last 10 years that I've been involved in these sorts of things," says Ingo. "It's really encouraging to see the variety now of non-binary people, poly set-ups. People are freer in their groupings of sexuality and I find that really liberating." First timers to Klub Fukk, which takes place five or six times a year at The Hoist, are advised to come with an open mind and an idea of what they want out of their night. Workshops take place and are a great way for newcomers to meet people beforehand and find out about the rules, which include respect for each other's boundaries and not assuming anything about anyone's gender or sexuality.

[facebook.com/klubfukk](https://facebook.com/klubfukk)

## Sweat

Think saunas are only for gay men? Think again. Sweat is a friendly, safe, diverse and inclusive sex club and BDSM play space in London for women and anyone on the trans\* spectrum. Going strong for four years, Sweat is perfect for those who like it hot and dirty, with play spaces, sauna, steam room and a sofa area to chat and relax. Newcomers are welcome as well as more experienced players, and the evening is drug and alcohol free to enable communication and enthusiastic consent. First timers will receive a briefing and introductory session before the event, explaining the ethos and ground rules, and Sweat even provide icebreakers and a buddying system to make sure everyone feels comfortable. Rosa, who runs Sweat alongside Ingo and Jude, says: "A queer sex space is, for us, somewhere that we can go and meet with other similar queer people, not feel like outsiders and know there are likely to be people there who we may desire or who may desire us for who we are, not how we look or identify." If you want to attend one of their events, join their mailing list by emailing [sweatlondon@gmail.com](mailto:sweatlondon@gmail.com).

[sweat-london.co.uk](http://sweat-london.co.uk)

## Kinky Salon

Described as an "arty sex party", Kinky Salon puts the fun in sex and is perfect for beginners. While sex does take place, it's part of a wider event and you can have an amazing time without getting down and dirty. Inclusive of everyone regardless of race, gender, sexuality, age or disability, KS recently celebrated its fifth birthday and holds several events a year all with imaginative dress codes to make sure everyone looks as silly as each other. "It's a great leveller," says Kinky Salon's Dani. "It's about having a giggle at yourself instead of the expectation that you have to be your sexiest self." So what can a newbie expect? "We know that people can be a bit nervous when it's their first time, so we make sure that they are given a big friendly welcome by our community, showing them around the venue and introducing them to other guests," Dani says. As for ground rules? "Consent and communication make the best lube." Check out their website for more info.

[kinkysalonlondon.com](http://kinkysalonlondon.com)



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY, EXILIO!

THE LONGEST-RUNNING LATIN DANCE CLUB CELEBRATED ITS 19TH BIRTHDAY LAST MONTH WITH A FUTURISTIC THEMED PARTY

We're wishing a very happy birthday to Exilio, which turned 19 last month! The longest-running LGBT Latin dance club in London launched at Latimer Road in 1996, and has since become a linchpin of the capital's scene. Promoter Gloria Lizzcano said: "This is my baby and I am very proud to say that Exilio is now a young adult. Emilio started in 1996 because there was simply nothing for the LGBT Latin community, except the Latin clubs where we could not dance with the same sex, as we would be discriminated against." Now going strong at Guy's Bar in London Bridge, Gloria hopes there will be many more birthdays to come. "We look forward to serving the Latin LGBT community for many more years," she says.

[exilio.co.uk](http://exilio.co.uk)







**M**y BFF, Jess, is from Toronto. She introduced me to Canadian feminist art-rock covers-band Vag Halen when she was living in London, and we went to see them play live at a sweatbox of an underground bar, knocking back shots and moshing at the front so we could get a good view of Vanessa Dunn when she got naked on stage. At the end, when the music exploded into a riotous crescendo of AC/DC, Jess crowdsurfed. It was pretty much the best night ever. And I had the bruises to prove it.

Six months later, Jess moves back to TO, and I go out to visit her. Her city, she tells me, is super queer. "We LOVE Pride," she says. This summer, the 35th annual event – complete with Dyke March – took place at the end of June, attracting more than a million people in spite of heavy rain. There's also the nonprofit Inside Out LGBT film festival in May, and although there are no dedicated lesbian bars in the city, Jess says that there are loads of ladies' nights both in and outside of the Village on Church and Wellesley.

There used to be a country and western-themed knees-up called Steers And Queers but now it's all about Yes Yes Y'all (hip-hop/dancehall jam), Business Woman's Special and Big Primpin'. There's DJ Cozmic Cat ("HUGE LEZ") who does women's/queer party Cherry Bomb and Toastr in the Village ("Toronto's hottest party for women who love women"). The Beaver (1,192 Queen St West) puts on events such as Puppy Love with live porn screenings, as well as Beaver Karaoke, and Vibrations, a queer dub night.

Jess is a girl who likes to party, which is perfect because my girlfriend doesn't like staying up past midnight. Our first evening begins at the hip Drake hotel in West Queen West (also known as Queer West), where we sit outside in the sun drinking margaritas on the terrace. It's a great spot to people-watch and Jess knows everyone, even the waiting staff at the bar on the opposite corner. We catch up on news and exchange lines from our

favourite TV show, *Broad City*. (If you haven't seen it, watch it.) "Woo, you a pegga!" We do a lot of laughing, and a lot of high-fiving.

I'm not staying at the Drake ([thedrakehotel.ca](http://thedrakehotel.ca)), although I wish I was – it's got the Sky Yard roof bar, a concept store, quirky art exhibits and 19 rooms with trendy mid-century design. Plus, the staff are all hot. There's also standalone eatery Drake One Fifty ([drakeonefifty.ca](http://drakeonefifty.ca)) on York Street, which dishes up tasty lobster rolls and stone-baked pizzas. Both put on regular parties, live music and DJ nights – during Pride, the Drake went all out with polysexual happening A Club Called Rhonda. Jess was there, of course. But her shenanigans are unprintable.

After sundown, we head to the Village with Jess's girlfriend Aleks. The zebra crossings are rainbow-coloured and someone's shooting hoops in the middle of the street. Struggling to choose which bar to go into, I spot Pegasus. I take it as a sign from the goddesses of *Broad City* and, despite it looking like the tackiest dive bar ever, it turns out to be amazing.

We order a round of Canadian Molson lager and head to the back where there are a couple of pool tables upholstered in pink felt. We aren't even two games in when a pack of guys arrive all wearing zip-up leather dog masks complete with ears and snouts. One of them is given a bowl of beer and starts lapping at it as the others stand around him. Then they start playing pool.

The next morning, I have memories of blagging our way into private members' club Soho House for cocktails, and of a hilarious Uber ride in which Jess had engaged the driver in a word-for-word re-enactment of the best bits of *Bridesmaids*. There was also talk of getting in a hot tub but I don't think that actually happened.

We nurse our hangovers with caesars (Canada's answer to the bloody mary – with added clam juice) at my hotel, the Thompson ([thompsonhotels.com](http://thompsonhotels.com)), which has a pumping rooftop pool scene at the weekend. It also offers stunning views of the city skyline and the iconic CN Tower, which you can take an elevator to the top of and

## SCARLET WINTERBERG CATCHES UP WITH HER BFF IN TORONTO, WHERE THE GIRLS STAY OUT LATE

stand on a glass floor looking down. Sitting in the sun, we watch as groups of shirtless guys try to hit on girls in bikinis, and discuss our options for brunch.

We decide on veggie-heaven Fresh, which is located on a long, wide street called Spadina. My friend used to work here, back in her student days. "Hello, Fresh on Vagina," she used to say when answering the phone. (Classic Jess.) The menu is amazing – you can have power shakes made with almond butter and dates; supermilks made from turmeric, orange, ginger and hemp milk; breakfast burritos stuffed with scrambled tofu; and even "green poutine" – a meat-free twist on the local classic combining French fries, steamed pak choi, Swiss chard, roasted mushroom gravy, green onions and sunflower seeds.

Toronto is built around the shores of Lake Ontario, and apart from the waterfront, which has sandy beaches, kayak, boat and bike rental, my favourite parts of town are the Distillery District ([thedistillerydistrict.com](http://thedistillerydistrict.com)) and Queen Street West, where there are loads of independent boutiques, galleries, restaurants and cafes – make sure you pop into BYOB Cocktail Emporium (972 Queen St W), a mecca for mixology enthusiasts where you can buy all manner of glassware, bitters, twizzlers, coasters, recipe books and even chemicals for your own molecular creations.

Style Garage (78 Ossington Ave) sells cool stuff for your home, while Crywolf (91 Ossington Ave) flogs handprinted cards, badges and clothes. There's also swathes of colourful street art to look out for. Up the road is the White Squirrel Coffee Shop, named after a rare snowy squirrel that used to scurry about in Trinity Bellwoods Park, opposite. On our last morning, before work, Jess and I indulge in a bit of clean living and sit out in the sun for a breakfast picnic of fresh fruit and soya lattes. I'll miss this girl when I get back home. 

Toronto is super queer. Pride in June attracted more than a million, in spite of heavy rain



Visit [airtransat.co.uk](http://airtransat.co.uk) for cheap flights



# BLOOMSBURY BELLES

LUCY FRY ENJOYS A WEEKEND AWAY IN THE HEART OF WOOLF COUNTRY

Knowing that Virginia Woolf woz 'ere is enough to enhance any sapphic mini-break, but that's not the only reason my wife and I picked Tilton House for a couple of nights R&R at the end of summer.

Once the home of economist John Maynard Keynes, Tilton House ([tiltonhouse.co.uk](http://tiltonhouse.co.uk)) is a couple of miles from Berwick and seven miles from Lewes, in a pretty area of Sussex within easy reach of London. Most notably, though, particularly for fans of the Bloomsbury Group (artists and writers such as Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West, famous not only for their affair but also their free-spirited attitude to sexuality), Tilton is around the corner from Charleston Farm ([charleston.org.uk](http://charleston.org.uk)), home to Woolf's sister, Vanessa Bell, and family (as well as the location of the recent TV series, *Life In Squares*).

These days however, Tilton is used mostly as a retreat centre hosting small groups for weekend-long workshops in yoga, creative writing and songwriting, amongst others. Manager Shaun Treloar and his team have gone out of their way to make it feel like home. There are none of the airs and graces of a five star hotel but just as much thought has gone into the atmosphere. "The colour scheme we've used is about taking the natural influences outside your window and bringing them in, helping you to feel comfortable as quickly as possible. Some people can only spare a weekend – we get a lot of burnt-out mothers and frazzled financiers – and so we need to maximise their downtime."

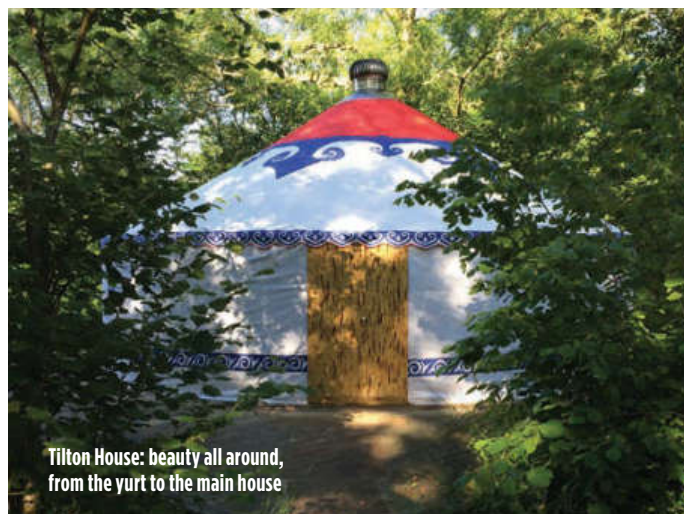
Back in May, whilst on a vegetarian Flow Yoga retreat organised by Gogashala ([gogashala.com](http://gogashala.com)), we realised why it's so popular. Our twice-daily trips out to Tilton's yurt to bend

and bind stresses away were spiritual, stretchy and sweaty; as much focused on education as exercise. This was thanks to top yoga instructor Rachel Okimo, but it was Tilton's rustic décor and peaceful atmosphere, along with its spectacular view across the South Downs, that galvanised the positive effects of the yoga. Those that wanted thinking space breezed around the private courtyard, Mediterranean in style and feel, or hunkered down in the lounge/library – an inviting and inspiring space where top quality literature lines shelves and the internet refuses, quite rightly, to do any work.

No wonder we wanted to go back. For starters, we hadn't had any time to explore the countryside, so busy were we down-dogging and learning about what yoga means in Sanskrit. So this time, at the end of August, we returned to Tilton on a bed and breakfast basis (available upon request when there is no retreat booked). We whacked on welly boots and went walking up Firle Beacon, catching our breath amidst views of the sea before heading east along the hilltop and dropping down into the picture-perfect village of Alfriston for a pint and some lunch at a historic pub, the George. For dinner, we hit the Rose Inn at nearby Alciston (cosy, authentic and ever-so-slightly *Fawlty Towers*), and the following day tried the upmarket (overpriced but delicious) Ram Inn in West Firle. We also enjoyed exploring the cafes of Lewes, approximately 20 minutes away (though a taxi costs about £25), as well as the strong local art scene and various gift and trinket shops.

There's no doubt that Tilton is one of my favourite wind-down boltholes. Retreat, mini-break or just accompanying a Bloomsbury junkie who wants to sleep near Charleston Farm – it doesn't matter why you go, you'll return a little lighter. **D**

[tiltonhouse.co.uk](http://tiltonhouse.co.uk)



Tilton House: beauty all around, from the yurt to the main house



## WAY

Trains go from London Victoria and Clapham Junction to Lewes or Berwick. See [nationalrail.co.uk](http://nationalrail.co.uk) for more information.



## NEWS

## ICE HOTEL IS COOL



Swedish Lapland's world-famous Ice Hotel opens its doors in December for the 26th incarnation of this unique living exhibition of art in crystal-clear ice from the nearby Torne river. A night in the Ice Hotel is a unforgettable experience and a great way to experience the Northern Lights. If you can't wait until December, take a sneak peek at this year's designs now.

[icehotel.com](http://icehotel.com)

## DON'T MISS

## EUROPEAN SNOW PRIDE

Bookings are open for the fourth annual European Snow Pride, Europe's biggest gay festival of winter sports, music and film. The event, which happens in Tignes, Espace Killy, from 12-16 March 2016, features an incredible line-up, but we're most looking forward to the giant pool party taking place in the amazing "Lagon", Tignes' pool, spa and fitness centre, which stretches over 5,000 square metres.

[europeansnowpride.com](http://europeansnowpride.com)

## FIRST CLASS



## HOT HOTEL

## PALM MOUNTAIN RESORT &amp; SPA, PALM SPRINGS

The uber-cool city of Palm Springs is undergoing a rapid transformation, with a series of new hotel openings and renovations reflecting the continuing development of this dynamic destination in southern California. Located within walking distance of Palm Canyon Drive and the city's very own Walk of Stars, the newly-renovated, Mediterranean-style Palm Mountain Resort & Spa has added 20 extra rooms and expanded its lobby area. The hotel's palm tree-shaded pool remains its main focal point and the perfect place to relax under the year-round desert sun, while enjoying Palm Springs' laid-back outdoor lifestyle.

[palmmountainresort.com](http://palmmountainresort.com)

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## CLASSIFIED FEATURE - **FOCX**

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Emma Airey, FOCX's director and founder, explains: "FOCX was originally formed early in 2011 with the sole aim of producing top-quality, British-made underwear for women. My seamstress, Beryl Chambers, is 84 this year and, thankfully, has no plans to retire. Beryl has worked tirelessly in the garment industry since the age of 14, when she produced swimwear for Speedo!

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FOCX clients are literally spoilt for choice when selecting their next pair of pants. Emma has worked hard to develop the boxer and boy short patterns over the past five years and it's not unusual for her clients to purchase (and covet!) more than 30 pairs.

For 2016, FOCX fans can expect more hand-crafted, generously proportioned underwear in plain or block-coloured cottons, along with a limited number of vibrant hi-tec fabrics.

Emma's ethos is simple: "My primary focus is on client service. I don't just want my clients to be satisfied with their underwear purchase – they should be highly delighted with their long-lasting, comfortable underwear and keen to recommend FOCX to their friends and family."

[www.focx.co.uk](http://www.focx.co.uk)

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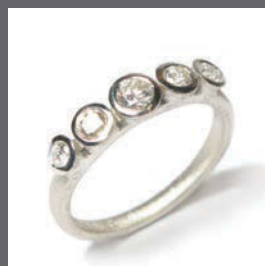
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# Pride of place

WHERE DO ALL THE QUEERS LIVE? JANE CZYZSELSKA ASKED HER FACEBOOK FRIENDS AROUND THE COUNTRY

The price of a one-bed flat in gay-friendly Brighton has risen by 11%

It's tempting to think that we can live anywhere in the UK and feel comfortable being out about our relationships but outside of the most obvious cities, where are the places that LGBT people are choosing to live?

Ten years ago, a report from the University of Sussex listed the top 10 most "gay" places to live in England and Wales. The list started with Brighton & Hove and ended with Lewes in East Sussex. Naturally London, Manchester, Bristol, Oxford and Nottingham were on the list, as well as lesser-known enclaves in Blackpool, Bournemouth and Cambridge. I'm not aware of any follow-up studies to the research Darren Smith carried out and the most recent survey, by the Office for National Statistics, doesn't list cities but focuses instead on the top five regions. These are London, obvs, the South East, the South West, Wales and Northern Ireland. So if we extrapolate from that additions to the list of cities where gay people live with relative ease, it would suggest that Cardiff and Belfast have become more gay-friendly in the intervening years. So too have more of the smaller coastal areas in the South East, stretching from Brighton all the way along the eastern seaboard to Eastbourne, Hastings, Rye, Margate, Ramsgate and Whitstable.

Anecdotally at least, all are areas that London-weary lesbian, gay and bisexual people are flocking to in droves,

partly to escape the rat race and mostly to raise their standard of living by moving to a place where you can smell the actual air and get a view that's more interesting than the bedroom curtains of your opposite neighbour.

That said, house prices for first-time buyers in areas that used to be cheaper than London – Brighton & Hove, for instance – have risen considerably in the last few years. In the last year alone, the price of a one-bedroom flat in the UK's gayest city has risen by just under 11%. That said, the city's popularity is ever on the up. A recent report found that Brighton & Hove is pretty trans-friendly, too. Although many LGBT people are shifting from urban areas, it should be stressed that they are, in the main, caucasian. Black and Asian friends suggest that their fantasies of escaping to the sea are offset by concerns about insufficient queer BME support networks outside of urban areas.

In London, the areas that were once lesbian enclaves – Hackney, we're looking at you – have been discovered and gentrified (often by wealthier LGBT folk) forcing many to move to cheaper parts to buy or to save up for a deposit as they rent. I have a friend who bought his flat in Battersea from Wandsworth Council, thanks to a first-time buyer's scheme which can be accessed if you've lived in the borough for six months or more. "It's still pos-

sible to find reasonably priced homes close to parks, the river, shopping and health services," he tells me. Another pal recommends Kennington, in the middle of the gay triangle of Kennington, Oval and Vauxhall, also considered a very gay/gay-friendly area.

Further north, and I'm not talking about London's Stoke Newington, a trans friend of mine advises that Derby and Nottingham are "not too bad for T people to live. Not the former mining areas perhaps, though". Further north still is the lesbian haven Hebden Bridge, close to Leeds, which is more gay-friendly than ever. The gay quarter in the city centre is near the fashionable redeveloped riverside area where one-bed apartments go from £85,000, about the same price as a decent one-bed in Hebden if Zoopla is anything to go by.

In the North East, Hull, which has seen significant changes since its designation as the European City of Culture in 2017, is considered a good bet for property investors, and locals tell me it's "extremely gay friendly". A one-bedroom flat in a warehouse in Hull Old Town also costs from £85,000.

Further north still, in Scotland, the twin cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh have their fair share of LGBT events and areas and of course the SNP (aside from homophobic donor Brian Souter). With a one-bed flat in Edinburgh's iconic Royal Mile on sale for £175,00, we're strongly tempted to relocate. **1**

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Family way: Sara, Nicole and baby Tyler

# “Our eight-year journey to become a family”

As a same-sex couple, Nicole, 38, and Sara, 40, knew that starting a family would not be easy but they had no idea how difficult and heart-breaking the process would turn out to be for them.

With the help of a friend who offered to donate sperm, the pair inseminated at home every month until after eight months Nicole fell pregnant. “We were ecstatic that finally it had worked and we would have that family we so badly wanted, but after six and a half weeks I started to spot and a scan showed I was miscarrying,” Nicole tells DIVA. Saddened but determined to continue, after a few months Sara and Nicole decided to try again. However, their donor withdrew from the agreement, leaving them “back at square one”.

Time passed while the couple searched for a replacement donor and Nicole underwent treatment for gynaecological issues following the miscarriage. They resumed insemination with a new donor but with their planned wedding looming and no sign of pregnancy, Sara and Nicole chose to pause until after their honeymoon.

At this point it was four years since they had begun trying to conceive and, in their mid-30s, they felt that time

**DIVA READERS  
SARA AND  
NICOLE SHARE  
THE STORY OF  
THEIR LONG  
STRUGGLE  
TO BECOME  
PARENTS**

**No matter  
how skilled  
the medical  
help, IVF  
comes  
with no  
guarantees**

was beginning to run out. Following some online research, Nicole and Sara contacted the Harley Street Fertility Clinic and booked a free consultation to discuss their options. Happy with the clinic’s friendly and inclusive approach, the couple decided on a course of IVF treatment on the advice of their consultant Dr Venkat. While many lesbian couples conceive successfully via IUI, a less expensive and medically demanding procedure, Dr Venkat recommended IVF for Nicole because of her age, weight and previous difficulty in getting pregnant.

However, as they were soon to discover, no matter how skilled the medical assistance, IVF comes with no guarantees. A first cycle of treatment did not produce the longed-for pregnancy and a few months later, they tried again. This time the couple were overjoyed to discover that they were pregnant, but once again they experienced crushing disappointment when a scan revealed that Nicole was suffering from an ectopic pregnancy. With the foetus developing inside her left fallopian tube instead of safely within the uterus, creating a risk of rupture and internal bleeding, Nicole underwent

emergency surgery to remove both baby and tube at seven weeks.

After three months the couple couple resumed treatment, with financial help from Sara’s parents as they had by now exhausted their own savings. The 14-day wait to find out whether Nicole was pregnant was “agonising” and seemed to last forever, but eventually they heard that not only had the pregnancy taken but they were now expecting twins!

Excited to think that their ultimate goal of a two-child family might be reached sooner than expected, Sara and Nicole began to believe that they would soon be holding not one but two babies in their arms.

Tragically, it was not to be. Following complications at 15 weeks, Nicole endured a premature labour four weeks later. The twins, Drew and Jamie, were too tiny to survive.

“Our world had just fallen apart,” says Nicole. “The miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy were hard on us, but seeing our two boys fully-formed and born so prematurely was something else. Our hearts were broken.”

A postnatal check-up revealed that a bacterial infection had caused Nicole’s early labour.

In spite of everything, their bereavement only sharpened Nicole’s desire to conceive. With three frozen embryos left from their last treatment cycle, the pair decided to try again. The first attempt was unsuccessful but on their second try, they were amazed to hear that Nicole was pregnant.

It was an anxious nine months, with the couple on an “emotional rollercoaster” and every scan marking a moment of remembered grief and loss, but this time luck was on the new family’s side and Tyler Jake Foscett was born by emergency caesarean on 9 May 2015.

Nicole says, “Both Sara and I are smitten with this handsome little thing that has come into our lives. We still can’t believe that he really is here, and finally we have our own little family that we have waited almost nine years for. We can’t imagine life without him now.”

With one embryo still stored at the clinic, they continue to hope for a future sibling for Tyler. **D**

Harley Street Fertility Clinic, [hsfc.org.uk](http://hsfc.org.uk)



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# How to have the orgasm you want

## 1 DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Practice! Get to know your body and what turns you on, whether that's a particular technique, activity or intensity of touch, or a fantasy that really hits your button.

## 2 GET IN THE ZONE

Switch off your phone, dim the lights and light some candles, don sexy clothes, read some erotica or watch some porn, take a shower or give each other a relaxing massage – whatever works for you.

## 3 STOP WORRYING

Relax. Don't focus too much on having an orgasm. Focus on enjoying the sex for its own sake, whether it's warm and cuddly or dirty and exciting. Be in the moment.

## 4 MAKE SOME NOISE

Tell your partner how it feels; breathe, moan, writhe if that feels sexy to you. Sound can be a real turn-on, not just for your partner but for you too. (Try it first when you're masturbating if you feel silly doing it in company.)

## 5 MAKE IT ABOUT YOU

Your orgasm is not a performance. Your orgasm is not something you owe your partner. Your orgasm is about you and for you.

## 6 COMMUNICATE

Tell your partner what you'd like her to do. She's not a mind-reader. If she's getting it wrong, give her some direction. Show her what you like. Try: "I really love it when you do X." Give her encouragement.

## 7 KNOW WHEN TO BACK OFF

If it feels too intense, or you lose sensation, ask for a break. Try kissing or turn your attentions to another part of the body. Wait for the heat to build again.

## 8 FREE YOUR MIND

Use your fantasies. It's not cheating to think about someone else when you're having sex. Taylor Swift, Don Draper, Rihanna, that girl you cruised on the bus... bring 'em on!

## 9 TAKE CONTROL

Adjust the angle, change the speed, give instructions – don't just lie there!

## 10 HELP YOURSELF

It's ok to take over if you want to. Touch yourself, show her what you like. Use a toy. Ask her to help out by touching, stroking or kissing you while you do what you know will work. Or let her put on a show while you take care of business. Sex is a learning experience and practice makes perfect...

# How to give her the orgasm she wants

1

## DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Practice! Get to know your body (and your mind) and notice what turns you on, but don't assume that it will be the same for your partner.

2

## GET IN THE ZONE

Switch off your phone, dim the lights and light some candles, don sexy clothes, read some erotica or watch some porn, take a shower or give each other a relaxing massage – take some time to feel connected with each other.

3

## STOP WORRYING

Enjoy yourself! Having or giving an orgasm isn't the most important thing.

4

## MAKE SOME NOISE

Show your partner how much you appreciate her beautiful body. Compliment her. Say "Mmmmm". If you both like talking dirty, go for it. You don't have to go overboard but silent sex can be a real turn-off.

5

## MAKE IT ABOUT HER

You don't have to make her come. Her orgasm is not something she owes you. Concentrate on making her feel great and ease off on the pressure. Sex is not a competition.

6

## COMMUNICATE

If you're not sure what makes your partner go mmmmmmm, ask her. Have a chat before you start having sex. "I'd love to do X to you tonight... does that sound good?" may be a good way to begin. When you're having sex, keep checking in. Think, "Oh god, I love touching your X. Is this good for you?" rather than "Am I doing this right? Tell me what you want".

7

## KNOW WHEN TO BACK OFF

If she seems to be taking a long time to come, ask if she'd like you to try something else for a while. Bear in mind that she may be lost in pleasure or concentrating intently and on the verge of coming, so don't just stop what you're doing without checking in first.

8

## FREE YOUR MIND

Does she have a favourite fantasy? If you know she dreams of threesomes or fancies Taylor Swift, she may enjoy you making up a story especially for her. Best to check this out before you start having sex unless you know each other very well.

9

## TAKE CONTROL

If you have cramp or jaw-ache, just tell her you need to do something else for a bit. You can keep the heat turned up by talking dirty, or telling her how much you love doing X with her until you're ready to go again.

10

## HELP YOURSELF

Want to touch yourself while you're doing her? Go ahead. "You first, then me" works well for many couples but it's not a rule. Hearing your lover approaching orgasm can be a huge turn on, if you're feeling it, go ahead – it might well result in the most mind-blowing orgasm, for both of you.





To browse new ads before they go into print call 0906 753 4404.  
Calls to 09067 numbers cost 80p per minute at all times.

#### PLACE AN AD

**BY PHONE - CALL FREE ON 0800 839 158 OR BY SENDING THIS TEXT 'DVDATE' FOLLOWED BY SPACE, THEN YOUR AD, TO 85010 (50P)**

Example DVDATE Sassy, sexy F, 25, seeks F for larks & love. Brighton.  
You'll receive a text with instructions & a request to record a voice greeting, this is essential for your ad to appear in print. Placing an ad will cost 50p per text. You'll also receive alerts to voice-mail msgs, 50p per text received. To cancel this service text STOP to 85010.

#### RESPOND & LISTEN

**TO ADS BY PHONE BY CALLING 0906 200 8396**

£1.10/min. Hear what advertisers say about themselves & reply if you like what you hear.

**OR VIA TEXT - SEND 'DV' FOLLOWED BY A SPACE THEN THE BOX NUMBER AND YOUR MESSAGE, TO 84010 (£1.50).**

Example DV 227045 Hi, saw your ad, want to talk?

Mobile numbers remain confidential. Advertisers receive replies direct to their mobile.

Replying to an ad will cost £1.50 per text. To cancel this service text STOP to 84010.

**THIS IS A PHONE AND TEXT SERVICE ONLY. WRITTEN REPLIES WILL NOT BE ANSWERED.**

#### ADVERTISERS!

**COLLECT YOUR MESSAGES ON 0906 753 4404 80p/min**

## MAYBE MORE

### SEE THE SEA WITH ME

F, 70, lives in a seaside resort, enjoys theatre, reading & politics. WLTm special F to relate to & spend time with. NW. Box 853717

### SIMILAR FEMININE F WANTED

Bi F, 49, enjoys pubs, live bands, the sea & clubs. WLTm a bi F or lesbian, who is willing to travel. Hereford. Box 999068 ☎ DV 999068

### CHILLED, EASY-GOING

F, 42, likes having a laugh, going out for meals, staying in, walking & the cinema. WLTm F for f/ship+. Swansea. Box 804572

### LOVING, LOYAL, FAITHFUL

Gay F, 42, 5'4", n/s, enjoys playing pool, tenpin bowling, bingo, nights in/out, day trips & breaks away. Seeks sim F. Plymouth. Box 819303 ☎ DV 819303

### SLIM, DARK-HAIRED

F, 42, GSOH, enjoys the coast, horror & comedy films, seeks non-butch F, 35-45, for good times. Tyne & Wear. Box 726173 ☎ DV 726173

### COMPATIBLE FEM F WANTED

F, 59, likes days out, meals out & cosy nights in. WLTm feminine gay F, for r/ship, if compatible. Notts/surrounds. Box 429489 ☎ DV 429489

### LOVE ME FOR ME

F, 48, loves animals, playing board games, classical & rock 'n' roll music, movies & country walks. WLTm similar F. Falkirk. Box 452797

### SAY THE L WORD

F, 45, likes comedy, snooker & cosy nights in. WLTm kind, caring, funny F for loving r/ship. Shrews. Box 625239

### THOUGHTS BECOME THINGS

Honest & caring F, 47, boyish, seeks feminine F. Come see the world with me. Clwyd. Box 196176 ☎ DV 196176

### CHATTY, SINCERE

F, 53, enjoys socialising, walking, the pictures, theatre & meeting new people. WLTm F. Lancs. Box 943260 ☎ DV 943260

### MESSAGE ME!

F, 30, looking to meet F for fun, f/ship & messaging. Wilts. Box 214114

### MEET, CHAT & HAVE FUN

Genuine, sincere F, 64. WLTm F, 60-65, for fun, outings & possibly more. Leeds. Box 443431 ☎ DV 443431

### LOVES HAVING A LAUGH

Gay F, 42, loves socialising, seeks F for fun, f/ship & hopefully r/ship. Mancs. Box 588840 ☎ DV 588840

### RETIRED, PROFESSIONAL

Blonde, blue-eyed F, 60, 5'6", lots of interests & brilliant SOH, WLTm F as companion, friend or for r/ship. Cheshire. Box 245555

### AFFECTIONATE, CARING

F, 51, seeks genuine, similar F for f/ship & maybe more. Belfast. Box 357756 ☎ DV 357756

### HONEST, FUN

F, 43, likes socialising & lots of laughter. Seeks F for great r/ship. Mancs. Box 741884

### SLIM, BLACK-HAIRED

Brown-eyed F, 21, very close to her family. WLTm genuine, kind, nice, adventurous F. Mancs. Box 281994

### YOUNG, ATTRACTIVE

Sexy F, 28. WLTm nice, free, understanding F who is there for me seven days a week. No jealous-minded people. W Yorks. Box 145536

### FLOWER IN SUMMER

F, 50, likes the garden. Seeks F, similar age. If you are interested, I would like to meet you. W Yorks. Box 662908

### FUN & FLIRTATION

F, 51, likes gardening, cinema & all the general things. WLTm F to flirt with and get to know a bit better. Mersey/e. Box 785411

### LOYAL, THOUGHTFUL

Gay F, 59, smoker, seeks affectionate, feminine gay lady, 45+, for girlfriend, fun & much more. Notts. Box 995264 ☎ DV 995264

### OUTDOORS PERSON

F, 53, 5'2". WLTm F, similar area & age, who enjoys meals out, movies & theatre, for f/ship & to see what happens. S Ldn. Box 408924 ☎ DV 408924

### VERY OUTGOING

F, 40s, slim, 5'6", red hair, blue eyes, WLTm F for fun times, maybe more. Swansea. Box 757493

### HONEST, EAGER

F, 43, seeks F for long-term, lasting r/ship, Darlington. Box 204027

### SLIM, WITTY

F, 49, blue eyes, attractive, 5'6", genuine, likes theatre, dinner, conversation & sports. WLTm F to laugh & click with. Essex. Box 157818 ☎ DV 157818

### FRIENDLY, OUTGOING

F, 66, likes holidays, animals & meals out. Seeks nice F, 65-72, to meet up with & have a chat. Oldham. Box 438505

### A GREAT NIGHT OUT

F, 31, enjoys travel, cinema, playing pool & bowling, looking for like-minded F for f/ship. Cardiff/Bridgend. Box 572639

### FOOTSTEPS ON THE DANCEFLOOR

F, 57, 5'3", dark hair, likes car boots, reading, holidays & socialising. Seeks F for f/ship, r/ship. Mancs. Box 888408

### QUIET, SINCERE

F, 23, likes a few drinks out, seeks lovely F for fun times & a reason to be. Ayr. Box 357879

### SINCERE, HAPPY

F, 50s, likes gardens & travel. Seeks nice F for something intimate. Belfast. Box 372189

### SEEKING MS RIGHT

Single, bi F, 57, attractive & full figured. Seeks F, similar age, for fun times. Cotswolds. Box 283751 ☎ DV 283751

### FRIENDLY, HONEST

F, 24, student, seeks F for f/ship & intimacy. Cardiff. Box 599721

### BI-CURIOS BUXOM

F, 52, size 18, seeks bisexual, or curious F, 50-65, for f/ship & fun times. Hull. Box 417395 ☎ DV 417395

### THROUGH THE MIST

Attractive F, 52, 5'5", hazel eyes, seeks F for f/ship & r/ship. Gloucs. Box 145226

### BIG & BEAUTIFUL

F, 49, big heart, fun, seeks F to be her soul mate. B'ham. Box 400696

### GENUINE, FUN-LOVING

F, 52, likes cinema, nights in & out. Seeks F for fun times & possible r/ship. Mancs. Box 523480 ☎ DV 523480

### LOVELY

F, 27, seeks similar F for f/ship, fun & more. Wrexham. Box 620424

### HONEST, SENSUAL

F, 63, 5'8", medium build, seeks similar F for good r/ship. Ldn. Box 584603

### SINCERE, GAY

F, 36, seeks gay F for f/ship, nights out, meals out, etc. Rhyl. Box 163669

### LIFE, LOVE & HAPPINESS

Sincere, loving F, 56, seeks lovely, laid-back, feminine F to share life, love & happiness. Exeter. Box 623594 ☎ DV 623594

### MUSIC LOVER

Fun, outgoing F, 41. Seeks F for nights in/out, socialising & cinema. Mancs. Box 291609

### SLIM, FEMININE

Bi F, 48, seeks similar F for fun, f/ship & maybe more. Central Mancs. Box 301282 ☎ DV 301282

### HAPPY-GO-LUCKY

F, 53, slim build, WLTm F for f/ship, hopefully leading to LTR. W. Yorks. Box 411452

### FRIENDLY, KIND

F, 52, 5'5", medium build, seeks similar F for mutual happiness & contentment. Mancs. Box 792911 ☎ DV 792911

### GENUINE, FUN

F, 45, seeks F for socialising, laughter & r/ship. Mancs. Box 498200 ☎ DV 498200

### MAYBE MORE

Outgoing F, 35, medium build, loves life, seeking F of any age for fun, maybe more. Lancs/Merseyside. Box 945612 ☎ DV 945612

### SINCERE, LOVING, THOUGHTFUL

F, 61, passionate about plants & gardens, enjoys walking, dogs/cats, cooking & quiet times. Seeks similar F for LTR. S Ldn. Box 379461 ☎ DV 379461

### QUITE BOYISH

F, 47, 5'6", likes to talk, not into the scene, into complimentary therapies & days out. WLTm F for f/ship, maybe more. Bradford. Box 909633 ☎ DV 909633

### FEMININE

F, 51, enjoys most things including cinema & meals. WLTm nice, genuine F & hopefully that someone special. Gloucs. Box 975380 ☎ DV 975380

### SPIRITUAL, SINCERE

F, 38, single mum, likes travel & writing. Seeks F for coffee, chats, possibly intimacy & more. Co. Down. Box 861404 ☎ DV 861404

### SINCERE, QUIET

F, 61, GSOH, has two dogs, seeks F for good f/ship & further. Omagh/Co. Tyrone. Box 660622 ☎ DV 660622

### SINGLE LESBIAN

In her 30s seeks British/Asian or mixed-race single bi/lesbian girlfriend, 19-40. Coventry, B'ham or W. Mids. Box 952234 ☎ DV 952234

### HONEST, CARING

Kind, loving F, 62, n/s, likes cinema, theatre, walks, dogs & nature. WLTm F with similar interests, for LTR. Kent. Box 112412 ☎ DV 112412

### KIND, SENSITIVE

F, 46, likes meals out, cinema, shopping & the seaside. Seeks caring, honest, reliable F for f/ship & r/ship. Essex. Box 609985 ☎ DV 609985

### CUDDLY, BUBBLY

F, 44, 5'7", loving, with big heart. Seeks similar, honest, kind F. W Mids. Box 874664

### CONTACT ME

Butch F 54. Enjoys walks in the country, meals out, poetry & theatre. Seeks like-minded F. Mancs. Box 515033 ☎ DV 515033

### LOVING, CARING

Sincere, faithful F, 62. Enjoys music, walking & the beach. Seeks F partner with similar interests. Kent. Box 537564 ☎ DV 537564

### ATTRACTIVE, FEMININE

F, 52, but not into dresses & skirts. Seeks similar F, for nice meals & coffee. Gloucs. Box 298545

### GOOD-LOOKING

Mixed-race F, late 30s, passionate, honest & caring. Seeks feminine, gay F for fun, maybe r/ship. Stoke-on-Trent. Box 196228 ☎ DV 196228

### LOVING, CARING

Sincere, faithful F, 62. Enjoys music, walking & the beach. Seeks F partner with similar interests. Kent. Box 537564 ☎ DV 537564

### PERFECT DAY WITH YOU

Stylish, fem black F, 43, looking for non-scene F companion. Essex. Box 150999

### EASY-GOING, NICE

F, 45, likes a laugh & socialising. Seeks F for fun & possible r/ship. Mancs. Box 789818 ☎ DV 789818

### ENJOYS LIFE

F, 35, enjoys days out, pubs & clubs. WLTm honest F, any age, for r/ship. Mancs. Box 445432 ☎ DV 445432

## NO STRINGS

### A DEEP CONVERSATION

Petite F, 34, size 36C, blonde hair. Would like to have fun on the phone with the right F. Call me. Gloucs. Box 912869

### FUN FEMALE WANTED

F, 25, skinny, long blonde hair, green eyes. WLTm F to chat with & have fun with. SW Ldn. Box 121981

### GENUINE, FRIENDLY

F, 50, 5'5", likes DIY, cats & cooking. Seeks nice F for fun & f/ship. Ldn. Box 101823 ☎ DV 101823

### ATTRACTIVE, BISEXUAL

F, 60s, has a partner, seeks similar, bisexual lady for adult fun & f/ship. N. Surrey/Middx. Box 812077

### MUSIC TO MY EARS

F, 35, easy-going, loves life & likes music. WLTm F, local area, for sexy fun & f/ship. Merseyside Box 113991 ☎ DV 113991

### FEMALES RULE!

F, 22, seeks F for great times. B'ham. Box 556726

## JUST FRIENDS

### HONEST, FRIENDLY

F couple, 46, love music & meals out. Seeks like-minded F friends for nights out in Glasgow. Box 282737 ☎ DV 282737

### CONVERSATION & LAUGHS

Sincere F, 44, into food, cinema & drinks. Looking to put a group together of like minded F's, 35-55, for f/ship. Sheffield. Box 210859 ☎ DV 210859

### LIFE BEGINS...

Animal-loving F, 33, seeks friends for socialising, laughter, intelligent conversation & a little bit of mischief. Somerset. Box 757543 ☎ DV 757543

## Customer Services:

Dating FAQs & Advice Line

**0906 200 1036**

Calls cost £1.10/min plus network extras

Complaints & Service Provider

**0330 333 6946**

**CALL CHARGES:** Calls to 09062 cost £1.10/min at all times (BT Premium Rate). Calls to 09067 cost 80p/min at all times. Calls to 0800 are free. Payphones & non BT network provider charges may vary. 0800 numbers may be chargeable from mobiles. **TEXT SERVICE:** Replying to an advert is charged at £1.50 for every text response received. Advertisers will be charged 50p for every text response received and 50p for texts alerting them that they have a voice message. Please take care to follow the instructions as all messages are charged for, including error messages - charges dependent on shortcode. All texts sent must be no more than 160 characters & your standard network charges apply. SMS shortcodes are reverse billed at the following rates: 85010 - 50p; 84010 - £1.50. Available on all UK networks. **18+ only. Service provided by ATS, PO Box 788, London EC1V 7ZA.** **DISCLAIMER:** DIAL A DIVA Magazine assumes no liability for the content of, or reply to, any personal advertisement. The advertiser assumes complete liability for the content of all replies to any advertisement or recorded message and for any claims made against DIAL A DIVA Magazine as a result thereof. The advertiser agrees to indemnify and hold DIAL A DIVA Magazine harmless from all costs, expenses (including our solicitor's fees), liabilities and damages resulting from or caused by the publication or recording placed by the advertiser, or any reply to such advertisement. By using Dial-a-Diva, the advertiser agrees not to leave his/her telephone number, last name, or address in his/her voice greeting message. Your ad may appear in other publications.



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# NO PROBLEM

IF YOU'VE  
GOT ISSUES,  
WE CAN HELP

## I CAN'T ORGASM WITH A PARTNER

Hello Jane,  
I'm writing because I have a problem that is concerning to me. You see, I find it impossible to come with other girls. I can do it on my own but when I'm with other girls, I just can't do it. It's really frustrating to me and also to the people I sleep with. I don't know what to do about it. It's as if I'm afraid of what might come out of me if I do come but I'm not sure what it is that I'm afraid of. I've never been with another woman who reacts this way so I feel like I'm a bit of a freak and a disappointment for anyone I ever sleep with. Lately I've started drinking a lot more when I'm out so I don't have to really deal with the reality but it's always there, the next day, along with my hangover. I hate it. I'm starting to feel really embarrassed. All I want is to have an orgasm with someone!  
Please help.

MK

Dear MK,  
I'm sorry to hear you're feeling embarrassed about not being able to come with someone else. I consulted sex and relationship counsellor Amanda Middleton, who told me: "It's not so much a problem with orgasm but more one with surrender – unless you are a squirter, in which case that's a really hot conversation to start having with partners. What 'comes out' during

orgasm is precious and deserves our respect (whatever it may be). Clearly you trust yourself with this preciousness, yet are challenged to share it with another."

Amanda suggests you explore your relationship to receiving. Can you take in all of the sexual touch your lover offers? Perhaps you're feeling shame or worry about your performance or image and this might be getting in the way of taking it all in. If this resonates with you, Amanda suggests you might consider what you and/or your partner would need to do to allow you to surrender more deeply? "Staying present with your breath, breathing more fully and deeply and sending all your awareness to the sensations you are receiving is a great way to surrender," she says. "Introducing a blindfold or restraint – excellent tools for amping up our ability to surrender – might allow you to give over to the sex a little more."

Amanda wonders what your beliefs about solo orgasms and partnered ones might be, as it could be these that are creating distraction or distance during sex. It might be helpful to affirm to yourself "orgasm is inevitable" or something similar, she advises. Believing you will orgasm with a partner is key to interrupting whatever is happening for you during partner sex. Finally, Amanda notes, for many of us orgasm is a sacred, precious experience and sharing it with someone else can be terrifying. There is no shame in feeling this way; if you can, tell your partner(s) how you feel – those who respond sensitively to you will be worth hanging on to. Those who respond negatively or who can't accept you/negotiate the way your desire manifests are unlikely to be satisfactory sex partners.

jane

## READERS' REPLIES

Lots of women are like that. Heavy drinking certainly won't help. It's a question of relaxation and trust, that's all. I know you think it's a big deal and it's really frustrating, but really, it will never happen if you don't relax. It's like the elephant in the room... the more you don't want to think about it, the more you do. Have you thought about getting yourself off with your lover present? You know what works for you. Teach her how you like it and talk to her... the more you trust her, the more you will relax. Don't go into it expecting an orgasm, enjoy yourself, have fun, great sex isn't about who comes and how many times, it's about laughing and loving and pleasure. Every woman is different, every sexual encounter is different. You are perfectly

normal. Many women go through life without ever reaching orgasm. You can, you know you can, your only obstacle is your own mind... and you CAN control that. Enjoy.

**Jules Kelvi**

Have you tried telling her what makes you come when you do it yourself? Experimented with toys, perhaps? It sounds clichéd but the more you focus on it and think about it (especially if you are worrying), the harder it is to get that release. Try focusing on the pleasure of the experience and let it come naturally. Remember not all women can orgasm all the time – chin up.

**Rachel ShadowCat Newland**

Amanda Middleton can be contacted at [amandamiddleton.com](http://amandamiddleton.com)



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*Release your inner  
DARK SIDE*



I'D RATHER  
**GO NAKED**  
THAN WEAR FUR

[ Be comfortable in your own skin,  
and let animals keep theirs. ]



**P!NK**  
FOR **PETA**

When it comes to technology, I'll admit to being pretty selfish. I want my technology to work for me. It needs to look pretty, it needs to make my life easier and it needs to entertain me.

On the flipside is technology which makes it easier to help others, and in between are apps which help both you *and* someone else.

Rhoda Meek is an IT consultant and designer with a social media addiction, a crochet habit, a RaspberryPi and two left feet.

[wodieskodie.com](http://wodieskodie.com)  
[@wodieskodie](mailto:wodieskodie)



# TECHNOLOGY

## CARE TO SHARE?

RESIDENT GEEK RHODA MEEK EXPLORES THE APPS THAT GIVE WHILE YOU LIVE

### CHARITY MILES

Charity Miles is an app which donates as you get yourself fit. Track your exercise miles with the Charity Miles app and earn 10¢ per mile for bikers, or 25¢ per mile for walkers and runners, for your charity of choice. The donations are made by corporate sponsors, not by you. I'm not sure how I feel about that on an ethical basis, but at least money is going to a good cause. Yes, it is American. Sadly, I couldn't find a similar app based in the UK. I'm about to get going on Couch To 5k (again) and I'll have this app in my pocket, too.

Find out more at [charitymiles.org](http://charitymiles.org).



WHAT'S  
YOUR CURRENT  
GEEKY OBSESSION?  
LET ME KNOW!  
[GEEK@DIVAMAG.CO.UK](mailto:GEEK@DIVAMAG.CO.UK)

### OK FINE, I GIVE IN!

Yes, I know, it's the Sex Issue, so here for your enjoyment is the latest in high-tech pleasure. This new vibrator is called Crescendo. You can change its shape, and mould it to suit your purpose. Its makers have avoided the stereotypical dildo shape in an effort to offer "more subtle, playful, non-phallus-shaped toys for women".

The actual vibrations are also customisable. With a "vibe store" available on the accompanying Mystery App, you can buy or make customised vibration patterns which sync to the six independently-controlled motors. "Think of it as an iPod, with the vibes as songs," the makers say. If you give your partner control of the app, things could get even more interesting...

[mysteryvibe.com](http://mysteryvibe.com)



### BUDGE IT!

Budge is a simple app, but it has the potential not only to be lots of fun, but to raise money for charity too. Basically, you use the app to challenge friends, family or loved ones to do something. If they fail to do it, they must make a micro-donation to charity. It's like a game of truth or dare, without the embarrassment or the hangover.

[thebudge.com](http://thebudge.com)

### CLICK, EARN, DONATE

Clic And Walk is an app which sends you on "missions" at home, in shops or other locations, to take photos or write short reviews in real time and earn up to £8, all the while contributing to a good cause.

For every £6 earned, 50p is donated to the Trussell Trust, the largest foodbank charity in the UK, with a network of over 420 centres providing emergency food to people in crisis. You can also choose to donate everything you earn via the app to the Trust. There is no administration and no obligation involved. Clic And Walk takes care of adding up the donations made and transfers them directly to the Trussell Trust.

The app is free on Android and Apple. [uk.clicandwalk.com/blog](http://uk.clicandwalk.com/blog).







ADDITIONAL  
DIGITAL  
CONTENT

More information on p7  
[divadigital.co.uk](http://divadigital.co.uk)

October /  
November

6.11

**MYKKI BLANCO**

*The Laundry, London*

Transcendental, box-bursting, fully woke, punk ass rap from the golden lips of Mykki Blanco. You have not seen anything like this before.

[tinyurl.com/DIVABlanco](http://tinyurl.com/DIVABlanco)

28.10

**IT'S A MAN'S WORLD**

*The Glory, London*

Step aside, queens, because the bois are here to show they (actually) do have the Charisma, Uniqueness, Nerve and Talent to bag the £500 prize at the Glory's first ever drag king contest.

[tinyurl.com/DIVAgldrag](http://tinyurl.com/DIVAgldrag)

29.10

**TRANSVERSE**

*Vogue Fabrics Dalston, London*

Traverse your boundaries with TransVerse, an evening of performance, music and words starring Rhyannon Styles, Stuart McKenzie and AH MER AH SU at VFD.

[tinyurl.com/DIVATransVerse](http://tinyurl.com/DIVATransVerse)

31.10

**LE FREAK**

*Bangkok Bar, Manchester*

Everybody's favourite pop party Pop Curious? are hosting a Halloween do! Ghosts of Madonna past, present and future will be in attendance.

[tinyurl.com/DIVAPopCurious](http://tinyurl.com/DIVAPopCurious)

31.10

**THE REST IS DRAG**

*AXM, Manchester*

GO BACK TO PARTY CITY BITCH! And so she did. The inimitable Sharon Needles will be giving her best spooky at this special Halloween performance, flanked by Ms Alaska Thunderfuck 5000.

[axmgroup.co.uk/axm-club-manchester](http://axmgroup.co.uk/axm-club-manchester)

THE NIGHTS  
ARE GETTING  
LONGER,  
BUT THAT  
JUST MEANS  
MORE TIME  
TO PARTY,  
RIGHT?

5.11

**THROW SHAPES**

*Ovalspace, London*

Micachu And The Shapes make the kind of avant-garde din that renders other new music sound, well, a little conservative in comparison. Expect lesbians with alternative lifestyle haircuts and angular girlfriends.

[tinyurl.com/DIVAShapes](http://tinyurl.com/DIVAShapes)

6.11

**UNQUIZZY BOP!**

*Bethnal Green Working Man's Club, London*

Queer quiz night and mini-disco in aid of Bow Food Bank, with your hosts Unskinny Bop! Get there early and there's a cockle-warming meal in it for you.

[tinyurl.com/DIVAUnquizzzy](http://tinyurl.com/DIVAUnquizzzy)

**7.11****THE WOMAN WARRIOR**

*The Phoenix Cinema, London*  
Action drama Njinga, Queen Of Angola tells the real life story of Queen Anna Njinga, the African woman warrior who reigned at the turn of the 16th century.  
[tinyurl.com/DIVAQueenNjinga](http://tinyurl.com/DIVAQueenNjinga)

**7.11****ART AND ACTIVISM**

*Arcola Theatre, London*  
Glitterlickin London are a queer, posthumanist and techno feminist art collective Glitterlickin (SWE). And they would like you to help them start something GORGEOUS! Bring yourselves and the good fight to their start-up meeting.  
[tinyurl.com/DIVAGlitterlickin](http://tinyurl.com/DIVAGlitterlickin)

**14.11****THE DIVA DEBATE**

*Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool*  
Join the debate with DIVA ed Jane and a panel chaired by DIVA columnist and poet Jay Bernard, featuring filmmakers Campbell X and Claire Kurylowski (see p20), and multi-disciplinary artists Evan Ifekoya and Marcia X on themes of power relations and race politics. Liverpool's Homotopia festival runs throughout November.  
[homotopia.net](http://homotopia.net)

**14.11****GENDER AND THE POLITICS OF SHAME**

*LSE, London*  
A workshop bringing together activists and scholars from diverse disciplines investigating the role shame plays in the formation of past and present subjectivities, in galvanising advocacy and resistance, and in the construction of citizens and nations.  
[tinyurl.com/DIVAGenderShame](http://tinyurl.com/DIVAGenderShame)

**23.11****GET CREATIVE!**

*Sadler's Wells, London*  
The Gay Creative Fair is your chance to meet the various gay choirs and music

**25.11****ONLINE**

*Manchester Academy 2, Manchester*

Syd Tha Kyd (above, right), producer, singer, setter of trends and heartbreaker de nos jours, is landing in Manchester with her band The Internet to do her thing. (UK dates, 24-27 November.)  
[internet-band.com](http://internet-band.com)

groups of London, as well as a range of theatre, film, writing and other creative opportunities.

[sadlerswells.com](http://sadlerswells.com)

**25.11****A STUDY IN BLUE**

*The House, Plymouth*  
A performative gesture inspired by iconic queer artist, filmmaker and gardener Derek Jarman. Temporal orientations arise and fall away as John Molettress traces the origins of Jarman's exquisite himness.  
[plymouth.ac.uk/whats-on/jarman](http://plymouth.ac.uk/whats-on/jarman)

**28.11****EQUALITY BALL**

*Old Town Hall, Stratford, London*  
Dress to impress at Peter Tatchell's inaugural Equality Ball, featuring headliners Heather Peace and Britain's Got Talent's Ronan Parke. The theme is Baubles and Bling, so look out the tinsel and make yourself fabulous.  
[tinyurl.com/equalityball2015](http://tinyurl.com/equalityball2015)

**30.11****SOAKED THROUGH**

*The Fleece, Bristol*  
SOAK is music to see your breath to, standing in the dark at a bus stop in the crisp of evening. Their whole soulful ethereal, schtick will stick with you for a while. (UK dates, 22 October-5 November.)  
[soakmusic.co.uk](http://soakmusic.co.uk)

**5.11****BIRD LA BIRD**

*National Portrait Gallery, London*

The truly gr8 Bird La Bird presents A Queer Portrait Of A Workhouse. Go back into the annals of history to find out about the workhouse once existed on the site of the National Portrait Gallery and unearth hidden queer histories. Fancy more Bird? She's at the V&A on the 22nd, too!  
[facebook.com/birdlabirdperformer](https://facebook.com/birdlabirdperformer)





# DIVA

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Kristen  
Stewart

"I try to be true to myself"

PHOTO DREW GURIAN

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“I joined, met the love of my life within a week and 3 years on we’re getting married. All thanks to DIVA Date!”

“Just a little message to say thank you, you put me in touch with one of the most amazing women I’ve ever met”





*Love is in the air...*  
*Provincetown*

